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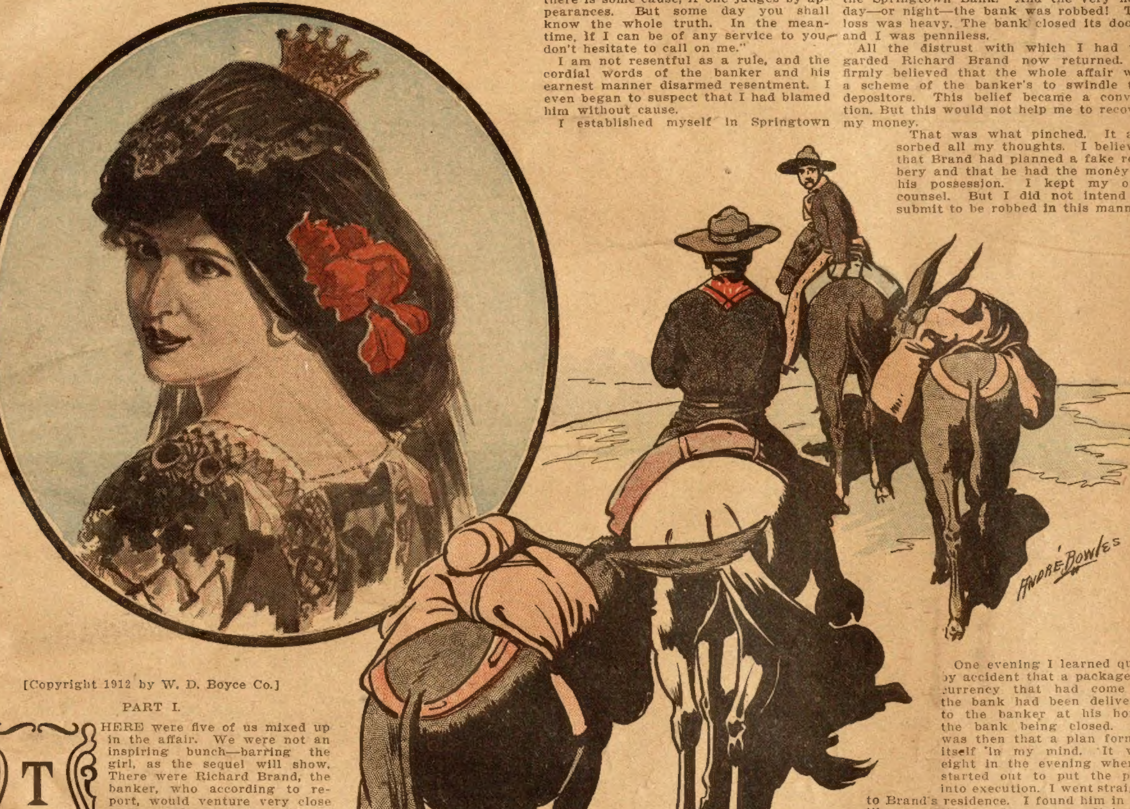
CHICAGO LEDGER

VOL. XL. NO. 41. CHICAGO, ILL., SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1912. SINGLE COPIES 5 CENTS.

The Third Partner

Or, *THE MISSING MONEY*

By WILL LISENBEE



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PART I.

THERE were five of us mixed up in the affair. We were not an inspiring bunch—barring the girl, as the sequel will show. There were Richard Brand, the banker, who according to report, would venture very close to the penitentiary to serve his own interests; Frank Delano, the cashier, involuntary embezzler and absconder; Felipa, the pretty Spanish senorita; her father, the alcalde; and the man who held up the banker. I was the robber—I, Redfield Smith, M. D., whilom adventurer, dreamer, and only son of David Smith, real estate broker and credulous victim of his friends.

My father was an honorable man, noted for his upright and square dealing with his fellow men. He was also noted for his credulity and childlike faith in humanity. This made him a prey to those who practice to deceive, and brought about that distressing state of things wherein the wicked keep on troubling and the weary and honest go into bankruptcy.

The latter is what happened to my father, and the one who flourished was a certain Richard Brand, subsequently president of the Springtown Bank. But all this happened before either Brand or I had come to Springtown.

After my father's death, for three years I drifted aimlessly about the country, trying to find a location in which I might earn a living by the practice of my profession. I finally brought up at Springtown, a promising village on the Western prairies.

My first surprise was to find that Richard Brand had arrived there the year before and had opened a bank. Rascality does not always flourish from year to year in the same soil. That, I believed, was the reason for Brand's presence there. My next surprise was to find Brand so evidently delighted to see me. He greeted me with overtures of hospitality and hearty good will. He expressed a profound regret for the unfortunate events of the past which had placed him in a false light. He assured me that he had done everything in his power to avert the disaster that had overtaken my father.

"I have been accused of being the cause of his failure," he said, "but I have been wrongfully accused. No one regrets it more than I. It is true that I was associated with your father in some deals in which he was a heavy loser; but I myself lost heavily, as I can prove. I am now getting on my feet again, and I hope to regain my losses. I am aware that you think ill of me, and for this there is some cause, if one judges by appearances. But some day you shall know the whole truth. In the meantime, if I can be of any service to you, don't hesitate to call on me."

I am not resentful as a rule, and the cordial words of the banker and his earnest manner disarmed resentment. I even began to suspect that I had blamed him without cause.

I established myself in Springtown and hung out my sign, but I soon discovered my mistake. The inhabitants, as I soon learned, bought nearly everything they used from the mail-order houses in the East, and they got their doctoring done by an absent-treatment hypnotic faker in Missouri. During my first two months in the town all the business I did was to pull a tooth for an old infidel who had the courage to place science and physical strength above absent treatment in dealing with a rebellious old snag, and for this act he was driven from the town and I was without a patient. I now saw that Springtown and I should not get along well together, and I began to look about for a new location.

It was about this time that a bit of good fortune came to me. I received from my father's estate the sum of five thousand dollars. This I deposited in the Springtown Bank. And the very next day—or night—the bank was robbed! The loss was heavy. The bank closed its doors, and I was penniless.

All the distrust with which I had regarded Richard Brand now returned. I firmly believed that the whole affair was a scheme of the banker's to swindle the depositors. This belief became a conviction. But this would not help me to recover my money.

That was what pinched. It absorbed all my thoughts. I believed that Brand had planned a fake robbery and that he had the money in his possession. I kept my own counsel. But I did not intend to submit to be robbed in this manner.

One evening I learned quite by accident that a package of currency that had come to the bank had been delivered to the banker at his home, the bank being closed. It was then that a plan formed itself in my mind. It was eight in the evening when I started out to put the plan into execution. I went straight to Brand's residence. I found him in the library. His greeting was cordial, but the situation was strained.

I did not waste words but came to the point at once. I took a check from my pocket. It was my own check on the Springtown Bank for five thousand dollars. I laid it on the table before him, and at the same time I slipped an automatic .32 from my pocket.

"Mr. Brand," I said, "I have a balance of five thousand dollars in your bank. I need the money and must call on you to pay the check."

I looked him straight in the eye; I was desperate. He glanced at the pistol and then at my face. His ruddy complexion went white.

"Redfield," he said in a choking voice, "you are making the mistake of your life!"

"I made that when I allowed a professional rogue to get hold of my money," I replied.

"But listen," he pleaded. "Let me explain. If you do not you will be sorry."

"I am already sorry," I told him, "sorry that I let you get hold of my money. Don't keep me waiting. You need not deny that you have the money in the house!"

"I do not intend to!" he retorted, a little haughtily.

His answer surprised me. He impressed me as the most brazen rascal I had ever met. This increased my anger.

"Then you will give me the money without delay!" I warned.

I felt that I should almost be justified in doing him violence. He looked me in the eye and his face paled.

"Very well; you shall have the money," he said.

He crossed the room and opened a safe. I followed him closely, being on my guard. He took out several packages of bills, counted out the required amount, and placed it in my hand.

"You can get out of the house now before I kick you out!" he said, his voice shaky.

"With pleasure," I assured. "I have no desire to remain under the roof with one of your character."

I left the room and the house. But now that I had my money, I began to have a vague sense of having been guilty of an act of folly. I walked through the darkness toward my lodgings. The very thought of the town sickened me; its weed-fringed streets, its rows of unlovely houses of impossible architecture, glorying in their new paint; the smell of decaying vegetation in the alleys, the discordant strains of the village band playing in the schoolhouse park, and the slouching figures of the listless inhabitants who were taking absent treatment—all these conspired to fill me with disgust.

I packed my valise, and a half-hour later I swung myself aboard a train that was pulling for the South. If ever there was a town that needed absent treatment it was Springtown.

The next morning, by the time the people of Springtown came to the postoffice to buy money orders to send to the mail-order houses and pay for their absent treatment, I was rolling swiftly through Oklahoma toward the Mexican border.

I had broken even with old Brand, but now as I had time to think over the method I had employed to accomplish this, I was not sure that the banker would not try to give me trouble. He was quite capable of that, and I reasoned that it would be well enough for me to be out of his clutches.

I had a dim idea of stopping in Texas, but I now decided to continue my journey into Mexico, and it was by an odd chance that I brought up in the little town of San Rafael. There wasn't much doing there in a business way, but it was evident that the corrupting influence of civilization had never reached its quiet precincts.

It differed so widely from Springtown that it looked exceedingly good to me. And as for old Brand, should he take it into his head to give me trouble, he would never think of looking for me in San Rafael.

The more I thought over the matter the more I become convinced that I had committed an inadvertent act in having pried him loose from my money in such an unconventional way. I began to regard myself as a fugitive from the law, and this got on my nerves.

But I was making the best of the bargain, and I opened an office for the practice of medicine. My acquaintance with the alcalde, and his friendship for me, gave me a sort of prestige both socially and professionally.

I found Mexico an inviting field for one who wants to practice economy, for I discovered that I could buy a peck of peanuts for a nickel, and for a dollar a day, one can live like a French count with a rich American bride. The man who can show a thousand dollars can call himself a king, and the inhabitants would never ask for other credentials. For a small sum spent each day, I kept the alcalde filled with dark red wine, and he put me in the swim with the smart set and gave me the title of Don.

The alcalde is the whole thing in a Mexican town, and if you can make yourself solid with him, you are it. He was a gentleman and a scholar, and while I taught him the opulent idioms of the nation of the single gold standard, he fed me the euphonious perfecto, Colorado-maduro lingo of the country of the involuntary revolution and forty-cent dollar. And I might have been happy, but I wasn't.

I now began to see things of nights, and Brand was always in the foreground of the vision, with a high-priced detective beating about the country in search of me. I almost wished I had let old Brand keep the money. The shadow of crime promised to outweigh the pinch of poverty. I began to feel something like I fancied the Mexican bandits must feel. Mexico, as I learned, isn't an inviting field for the bandit. If he could carry away enough of the demonetized silver of the country to pay his fare across the line it would be a fool thing to do, to rob some one to get it. The business of a ladrone—as the bandit is called in Mexico—has never paid. The most successful never make over fifteen dollars a month, and they live in the mountains and sleep with their boots on if they can afford boots—and never have a square meal. When they are finally caught they are taken to the crossroads north of the town and hanged to a tree and left there to dry up and blow away. This is done to discourage the business and for the moral effect it will have on the rising generation.

They had the bodies of six ladrones hanging on the trees when I arrived at San Rafael, and they were expecting another consignment from the authorities any time. The alcalde took me out on the North road and showed me the layout, and we sat down in the shade of a palm and smoked while he told me of the bright prosects of the country and of its great moral progress. In the old days, he told me, they rarely had as many as two bodies on the trees at a time, but sentiment was setting in against the ladrone business, and the six specimens on the trees was the result.

"Many of our peoples are simple childs of nature," the alcalde explained, struggling with the beautiful idioms of the English. "They love much the luxuries of the Americanos of the North, and when they have not it, they are ladrones; and they like better that they are hanged out here to dry than they herd goats and life simple."

I told him we had ladrones in our country, and many other kinds of drones, but, unfortunately, we could not hang them up to dry and blow away; for they made the laws and sat in the councils of the nation, and when the court asked them things they would change the subject and adjourn court, and they would go and teach a Sunday School class and tell of the starving heathen of other countries who never knew the blessings of a high protective tariff.

The alcalde did everything in his power to make my stay in Mexico pleasant, and there was something else that helped. Her name was Felipa and she was the alcalde's daughter. She was sixteen—which is rather old for a single woman in Mexico—and she had dark eyes and a tropic smile that went to a man's heart by the shortest route.

After I had made her acquaintance and walked with her in the moonlignt and when there was no moonlight, and had listened to her musical voice, I saw how it was possible to live in San Rafael. Presently I could see how one might even like to stay there forever. It is strange how a mere slip of a girl can change the whole aspect of a country and invest it with a thousand new delights.

That was what Felipa did. She converted San Rafael into a sort of Paradise. But Paradises, unfortunately, have serpents. The serpent was now approaching.

One evening, as I returned from a visit to the alcalde's residence, I was about to enter the tavern when I saw an American sitting on the porch. One glance into his face was sufficient. It was Frank Delano, the cashier of the Springtown Bank!

It all flashed upon me in a moment. The presence of the cashier in San Rafael was the work of Richard Brand. He had hunted me down at last. No doubt he would swear that I had robbed him, and if he could convince a jury of this he could place me behind the bars!

I began to feel desperate. I had no intention of surrendering. My blood was up. I thrust my hand into my pocket where my pistol rested, and then walked onto the porch and confronted the cashier. As soon as his eyes fell on me he rose with an exclamation of surprise. He held out his hand. I waved it aside. He looked hurt.

"Good heavens! what is the matter with you?" he stammered.

I drew a chair very close to him.

"I am onto your game," I said. "You have hunted me down, but it is for you to say whether or not this is to be the last hunt you will make! If you say one word against me or make any move to have me pinched, I will go to the alcalde and have you thrown into prison where you will remain till I set you free!"

He was staring at me with open-mouthed wonder.

"For the love of Moses, what are you driving at?" he gasped.

"Don't try to work any Jim Crow games on me!" I warned. "I can see clear through you.'"

"Why, you blamed maniac!" he breathed. "What the Sam Hill are you trying——"

I stopped him with a wave of the hand.

"Don't give me any mush," I advised. "I know wour game, but let me tell you, you're going to lose. I am the whole thing here. I am the alcalde's bosom friend and adviser. The people of the town look on me as a philanthropist, the Great and Mighty Past Master of Charities and King of Good Fellows. Make any attempt to injure me, and at a word from me you will be thrown into prison. I am the support of the tavern. I am the principal business and leading industry of the town. From the lowest beggar to the alcalde they all know me and profit by my staying. My money reaches every avenue of trade. I relieve the destitute and heal the sick, and my removal would be a calamity to the town that the people would rise up and resent. Will you be good, or shall I send for the alcalde?" I leaned back in my chair and looked at him defiantly.

"Say, Reddy," he said, "are you a rattle-headed chump or a maniac—which? I don't have the least idea what you are driving at. As for hunting you down and all that sort of rubbish, I can't for the life of me understand. If you ever harmed a toad or took a penny that didn't belong to you, I never heard of it. Come, old man, give me a tip. What's got you, anyway?"

I looked him straight in the eye but he never flinched. If he were playing a part he was surely making a success. I drew a breath of relief.

"Are you telling me the truth?" I said.

"Why should I tell you anything but the truth?" he asked.

"Then how do you happen to be here?"

"I might ask you the same question," he said. "But I'll explain—presently. You speak of yourself as if you were a malefactor. Tell me what you mean by all this idiocy?"

"Then you don't know?"

"I'll swear to it, if you require it."

"Then old Brand has not sent you here?"

"Good gracious—of course not. Go on and let's get through."

"Very well. You know I had a deposit in the Springtown Bank?"

"Sure."

"And that after the robbery the bank closed its doors and shut my five thousand dollars inside?"

"Yes," nodded Delano, "but as I left the bank the day before the robbery I cannot remember the amount of your balance."

"Well, you may not have known it, but I have good evidence that it was through Brand's manipulations that my father failed in business."

"I didn't know that."

"Under the circumstances you will see that I was not in the best of humor with Brand. I fully believed that he knew of the bank's insolvent condition when he took my money, and that the robbery was all a fake. I would not stand to be robbed, so I marched to Brand's house one evening, shoved a pistol under his nose and made him cash my check for the five thousand dollars."

"By George!" ejaculated Frank. "And he paid it?"

"Sure thing. It was a forced run. After I got my money I blew out of town. I had made up my mind to do that, anyway. When I had time to cool off a bit I was under the impression that I had made a fool of myself. Further, I could see that old Brand might give me trouble if he should feel disposed. So I drifted down here. I had used force against rascality and broken even with him. That is the whole story."

"By George!" exclaimed Frank and Brand never mentioned it to a single soul as far as I know."

"He didn't?"

"No; and though I have no reason to love old Brand, I will do him the justice to say that I think you are mistaken in him."

"What makes you think so?" I asked.

"A good many things," replied Frank. He lit a cigar and was silent for a moment. "I never got on very well with him," he went on. "We often disagreed. We had hot words, and I gave him a piece of my mind. He came back by suggesting that I resign, and I did. That very night the bank was robbed. But I knew nothing of all this for some time, for after leaving the bank I was taken with a fever, and for three weeks everything was a blank to me. When I was able to travel I pulled out for Santa Fe, where I remained till I was strong. I then began to cast about for something by which I might earn my living, for my resources were at a low ebb.

"While in the bank I had devoted my spare time to literature. I had been lucky enough to have a story accepted by a magazine, and I now thought of trying my hand at the business again. One of my efforts, a rather long story, had been rejected and returned to me. It occurred to me that I might now revise it and start it out again.

"The story I had folded into a neat package and sent by express. As I drew the package from my valise and opened it you might have knocked me down with a feather. Instead of the typewritten sheets of manuscript I had expected to see, I was amazed to behold a number of packages of currency, each marked $1,000. There were just ten of them. I began to think I had lost my senses, and for a little time I sat there in a sort of stupor. It was absurd to think that the editor of the magazine could make such an unthinkable mistake as to send me a package of currency in place of my manuscript. But a glance at the wrapper told the story. It was addressed to the Springtown Bank, and when I saw this the whole truth flashed upon me.

"It was all due to a mistake of mine—a most terrible mistake. I had received the manuscript back by express on the very evening I quit the bank. Another package was brought in at the same time—a package of currency for the bank—and the assistant had receipted for both while I was busy. He handed the packages to me, and in some way, I don't know how—for the illness of which I suffered for weeks was already upon me—I must have placed the manuscript in the safe and dropped the package of currency into a small handsatchel in which I had placed some other effects of mine after deciding to leave the bank. Then it had been a busy day, and it was almost closing time when the packages were brought in. In fact, I was ill at the time, and the whole affair is in a sort of fog in my mind.

"Of course, the mistake would have been discovered and I would have returned the money to the bank, but that very night it was robbed and my mistake was not discovered. The whole matter was now as plain as day to me.

"It was a shock to me. My first thought was of getting the money back to the bank as soon as possible, with the full explanation of how it got into my possession. I was troubled with the thought that old Brand might not accept my explanation; he might even suspect me of having taken a larger sum, or worse still, be inclined to connect me with the robbery, for as you will remember, the banker and I were not on good terms.

"But I would return the money at once and have the matter off my mind. But it was now past eight in the evening, and I must wait till the next day to consign the money to the express company. In the meantime I must keep the money.

"I was at the little town of Nutt Station at the time, and the hotel where I was staying was in keeping with the average hotel in the little towns of New Mexico. The proprietor was a Mexican whose countenance was not an index to sterling integrity, and as the amount of money in my possession would have purchased the hotel many times over, I hesitated to give it into the keeping of the landlord. I did not want to buy the hotel—not with the money belonging to the bank at any rate, so I decided to keep the money in my room and take it to the express office early the following morning.

"I placed the package under the bed covering and retired. I could not sleep, for I was now haunted with the fear that some one passing my window might have got a glimpse of the packages of bills. It was past midnight when I fell asleep. When I woke it was with the impression that some one was in the room. It was so dark that I could see nothing. I lay perfectly still, listening. I thought I heard a step and the next instant I felt a hand slip beneath the bed covering where I had placed the money. The thought of losing that wad of money belonging to the Springtown Bank spurred me to action. I slipped from the bed and mixed with the robber. That was the ugliest scrap I ever got tangled up in. The fellow was strong and desperate, and I was handicapped with the fear of having a knife slipped into my ribs at any moment. I rushed him, jabbing him furiously. While we were mixing I got onto the fact that he had the money, and this made me doubly desperate. I seized the package, and in the struggle we went down together. In my effort to hold onto the package of money I lost my grip on the robber, and quick as a flash he slipped from me and was off and out of the room.

"I raised the alarm, and finding the package of currency still in my hand, I slipped it into my pocket, and grasping my pistol, I ran in pursuit of the robber. But he had escaped. I returned to my room to find the landlord there with several others who had been roused by the sounds of the struggle. I explained that I had been robbed, and officers were set on the track of the robber, but he was not found.

"The package of currency had been torn open in the struggle and I was quite sure that my assailant had taken part of it with him, and my surmise proved correct. Of the ten thousand dollars contained in the package, but five thousand remained!"

This remarkable tangle of happenings will be explained in the concluding installment next week. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year, which means fifty-two issues of the most entertaining reading matter printed in any periodical in the United States. There will be great "doings" in the Ledger pages during the coming year, so you better send in a subscription and be happy.

* * *

Wanted Handicap Removed.

Just what constitutes news is a much mooted question, to the general public especially. The average newspaper reader considers that anything that pertains to him personally is the most important piece of news that a paper can print. A negro porter in one of the popular Kansas City clubs, recently divorced furnishes an example of one conception of news.

Approaching a reporter in the clubrooms a few days ago, the porter remarked:

"Say, boss, don't you all know I done got a divorce, and I ain't seen a single line about it in the paper yet, an' it's been mos' two weeks."

"Well, Rastus, that's strange," the reporter replied, trying to look serious.

"Can't you all put it in the paper now?" he asked. "'Tain't as how I cum to get the divorce that I care to let people know about, but don't you know, boss, that I meets a lot of cullud ladies every day that jes' won't speak to me, 'cause they think I'm married."

* * *

Interesting Discovery.

When Mrs. Mulligatawny arrived at her holiday haunt, to her dismay she found that her watch was missing. Thinking that she probably had dropped it on the thick, soft, diningroom carpet, she wired to the maid at home:

"Let me know if you find anything on the carpet in the diningroom."

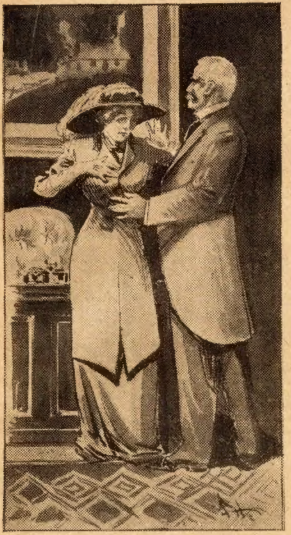
A few days later she received a letter from the maid, as follows:

"Dear Madam: I was to let you know if I found anything on the diningroom carpet. This is what I found this morning: Three champagne corks, eighteen cigar ends, five cigarette ends, thirty-six burned matches, and one pink satin slipper."

The President's Daughter

Or, The Female of the Species

By Vincent Oswald



"My boy, daddy!"

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Begun in No. 40, Oct. 5. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

PART II.

"WHAT'S that? Tell me about it! Quick!" cried Jessie.

Old Bill cast a reproving glance at his comrade; then did his best to allay, her apprehension.

"It may not amount to much, Miss Jessie. We've just come here, after takin' him home, and he was able to talk and walk. We intended to put all our information into Mr. Benton's hands; but we can't do that, now he's laid up. We can't get to Mr. Richardson himself, because Mr. Markley keeps between him and us. That's what brings us to you."

"Yes, yes; but this—this injury!" she persisted. "Tell me just how it happened."

Unable to evade her, they outlined all the occurrences of the morning.

"So he came to grief trying to save this bitter enemy—this wretch who wasn't worth saving!" she burst out tragically.

"I don't believe he was thinkin' so much of Markley as of the men," explained Bill, sagely; "he was afraid they'd be fools enough to make criminals of themselves."

"And it was while he was saving them," she retorted, vehemently, "saving them from themselves, that those whom he always called his 'children' turned beasts and tried to rend him to pieces!"

She fixed her burning eyes upon them in loathing contempt. They gazed helplessly and stupidly at each other; but finally Bill said gently:

"No, Miss Jessie; it wasn't that way at all. The blow was accidental to Mr. Benton. It was Markley they was after, and the trouble all come through Jim Blake and his cussed water-pipe. You see, it was Jim as got on to Matson in the first place, and made a beginnin' in bustin' Markley's soap-bubble; and then, when Jim finds out all it meant to Mr. Benton, he loses his head entirely. He was just like a roarin' madman; and if he could have connected that pipe with Markley's skull, it would 'a' been good day with the G. M. Mr. Benton had done things that Jim'll never forget, and he couldn't stand for nothin' mean against the superintendent. In fact, Jim Blake knows more about this here whole trouble than any of us; and he ought to be here now, but I don't doubt he's ravin' at home over the damage he's done Mr. Benton."

The girl had sunk back into the depths of her chair, and was sobbing convulsively behind her handkerchief. Suddenly, she dashed her handkerchief to the floor, straightened her figure, and extending a hand, said peremptorily:

"Give me the proofs! All those papers you spoke of."

Slowly Bill drew them from his pocket, and obediently laid them across her palm. Then she stood erect, and faced the men dauntlessly.

"I must go to Mr. Benton. It—it is my place and my right; for we—we are engaged to be married. You see, therefore, it's proper, too, that I should take care of this whole matter for him."

With his eyes fixed admiringly on the brave, unflinching face, Bill nodded acquiescence and approval; while Jerry, blushing to the roots of his hair, began awkwardly:

"Some of us wiser ones, Miss Jessie, sort of suspicioned as——"

Then, paralyzed by the glare of Bill's eyes, he stopped in confusion; and Mason, with intention more laudable than his effort was skilful, attempted to patch out the sentence innocently, if not conventionally, by exclaiming promptly:

"Suspicioned as how we all says God bless you both, Miss Jessie."

But she was blind to their confusion and deaf to their clumsy remarks; for she had sprung to a wall-button, and a trim little maid already stood in the doorway.

"Bessie, have Sam bring the car to the front door immediately. Quick, dear! This is a life and death matter!"

Then she turned to the men.

"Bill, you will go with me to show me the way to Jim Blake's home and help me to get the rest of the story out of him. here I will leave you and go straight on to Mr. Benton's."

"Oh, Miss Jessie," objected the overwhelmed old man, gazing in consternation at his soiled, shabby clothing, "I—I—ain't just fit."

"You're fitter than a prince, Bill Mason!" she retorted; en added, "Remember, it's for Mr. Benton's sake."

She disappeared through the doorway, leaving Bill in bewildered dubiousness, and Jerry silently shaking his head in ineffable admiration. But, as she made that final remark, there had been something in her tense, set face and half-closed eyes that impressed both men similarly.

Old Bill's thoughtful gaze turned slowly in his companion's direction; and, as his wily eyes fixed themselves earnestly upon Jerry's stolid face, he murmured with solemn significance, "God help Markley!"

"Amen!" rumbled Jerry, automatically; but that he didn't know the meaning of the word, was indicated by the fact that his eyes completely belied the import of the ejaculation. Moreover, he added, with unmistakable exultation, "Even his master, the devil, can't save him this time!"

A few minutes later, the girl entered the car; and Bill, before clambering to a seat by the chauffeur—where he modestly insisted upon installing himself—whispered into his comrade's ear:

"For the Lord's sake, Jerry, keep the boys quiet! and don't let 'em do anything. Nobody'll need to do anything now!"

From the car window a small hand motioned to Jerry, and he stepped forward. A pair of tear-dimmed eyes met him, and a low voice murmured:

"Jerry, it's a solemn thing to say, but it's been said before, and poor Jim Blake has proved it's a fact—that some of you men would die for Mr. Benton."

His rough face grew soft, and a strange light illuminated the homely features as he whispered awkwardly, "Why not, Miss Jessie, when some of us owes him more than life?"

The next moment, the vehicle rolled off, while Jerry swung down the street with his nose high in the air, his eyes fixed skyward, and his pace set to a long, buoyant stride that seemed to devour space.

Just as Bill had surmised, Jim Blake was at home, raving at his own folly, but raving in a sickbed, with his head swathed in towels. He painfully recounted to the girl all he knew; and, as she listened, the eyes that had flashed upon Bill and Jerry in open, fiery indignation, slowly took on an expression of slumbering, sullen ferocity that almost matched Jim's own.

"I couldn't stand it, Miss Jessie," wailed Blake, piteously—"I couldn't. Mr. Benton had done more for me and mine than any one'll ever know. He's snatched my little ones out of the very jaws of death more than once when I had made a fool of myself. Yes, he's saved those who are far dearer to me than my own life; so I made up my mind long ago that the life was his if he ever needed it. In my blindness, it seemed to me it was time to fight for him, no matter what the consequences. He saw; and he understood—understood all it meant; and he reached me just in time to save me and mine from my own madness, but he had to batter my face in to do it. And—and now—oh, God, Miss Jessie! may—maybe I've killed him!"

She shuddered violently, but managed to say kindly:

"No, no, Jim; let's trust that it will all turn out well. I'm going now to see him; and I hope to be able to send you some good news."

He turned his face away from her, mumbling incoherently the benediction of Bill and Jerry: "God bless you and him, Miss Jessie!"

Out on the pavement, with her foot on the step of the car, she paused, and turned the slumbering ferocity of those menacing, half-closed eyes upon Bill Mason, who had just bade her adieu.

"You—you spoke of Markley's broker, Bill. Have you ever happened to hear the name?"

"Yes, Miss Jessie; T. A. Binney & Co."

Ten minutes afterward, with bursting heart, she was bending over Dick's motionless form and gazing into his pallid face.

"He has been unconscious for an hour!" whispered the weeping mother.

Under the intense gaze, his eyes slowly opened and fixed themselves wonderingly upon those above him. But the benumbed and clouded mind apprehended nothing more than a vague association which caused the lips to mumble weakly:

"Stars, mother! Twin stars! Brighter than Venus! And soul, mother! beautiful, beautiful soul!"

The girl crumpled upon her knees at the bedside; her face dropped forward upon the sick man's breast; her whole body shook in great convulsions. Some one came softly into the room; and the quick eyes of Doctor Adams swept the spectacle at the bed, then rested with understanding inquiry on Mrs. Benton's face. She nodded significant acquiescence, and he shook his head comprehendingly.

"The ambulance is at the door," he whispered.

But sharp ears caught the words; and, springing to her feet, the girl sobbed in his face: "Doc—doctor, may I vis—visit him at that place?"

The professional man smiled kindly down upon her.

"Oh, yes, indeed; every day, if you wish. But cheer up! He's going to pull through in fine shape."

She shot him a look of gratitude that he remembered for a long time; then she murmured brokenly:

"I'll be there, doctor, ev—every day."

The next instant she was gone.

The president was alone in his office, pacing the floor in his nervous, restless fashion, when the raucous croak of an automobile horn floated from the street through the open window. A moment after, a rush of feet sounded upon the stairs; then a white-faced, disheveled figure bust in upon him and slammed the door shut with a sharp bang.

"Jess!" he gasped, in astonishment.

She threw herself precipitately into his arms, sobbing passionately:

"Oh, daddy, daddy!"

Suddenly, the sobs ceased, and she began to talk. As she proceeded, her features lost their pallor, and the flush that stole into her face deepened gradually to a feverish hue. The glow in her eyes flared to a steady blaze; her tongue quickened its pace, and the stream of words grew into a breathless, oratorical torrent of fervid, convincing language.

Impressively, the story she had mastered in haphazard pieces rolled from her lips in tumultuous, sequential tide; and dramatically she punctuated the narrative by hurling upon his desk the corroborating papers and documents. Never had he heard her talk thus; never had he seen her in such a mood; and the spectacle was a revelation.

At last she stopped; and he stood speechlessly before her, regarding her with an astonished pride that was too ill-concealed to have escaped her observation had she been less wrought up.

Finally, he exclaimed involuntarily, "Gad, girl, but you're like your mother!"

"I—I can't remember her well enough to know, daddy," she said softly.

"I can," he murmured, striding across the room and gazing thoughtfully out of the window—the same window through which the angry shouts of the raging men, reaching his ear and smiting his heart, had inspired him to such summary dismissal of his young superintendent.

For minutes he stood thus; then, walking over to her, he laid his hands upon her shoulders and looked down into her tearful eyes.

"Jess," he said, gently, "do you know that she made me?"

She gazed wistfully up at him.

"No, I didn't know it, daddy; but I—I sometimes suspected it."

"Yes," he murmured, slowly. "I'm not ashamed to confess it; for such a girl would make any man. She was the inspiration of my life."

He took a few turns up and down the floor, and came back to her.

"And so, you and Dick had reached a—an understanding, eh? before all this trouble occurred?"

"Yes, daddy."

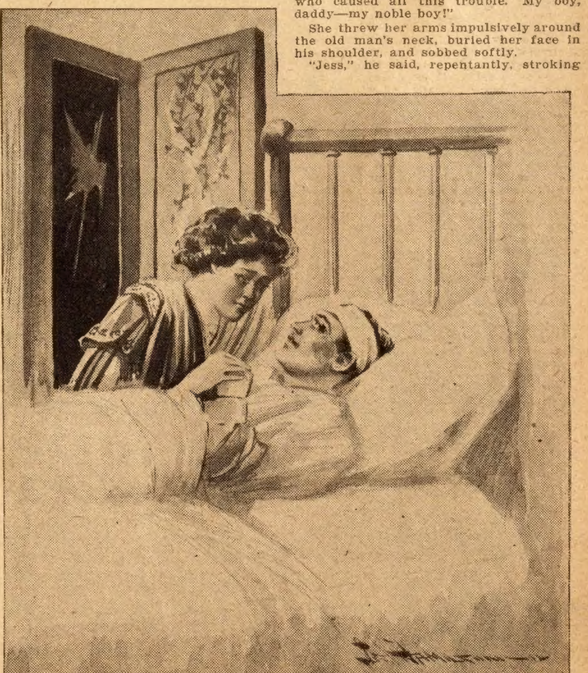
But he demurred, his eyes peering from under his shaggy brows with a quizzical gleam which her downcast gaze did not detect, "haven't I heard you speak of him as a—let me see! what was it?—oh yes—a mere boy?"

Then her eyes met his fairly, as she replied proudly:

"My boy, daddy—my boy because he's a real man! In his loyalty to you, and in his sense of duty to the established authority intervening between him and you, he has striven and suffered in heroic silence under the grossest wrongs and injustices. And now, in an endeavor to save his poor, ignorant 'children' from the folly to which they had been deliberately goaded, he has almost laid down his life for that of the diabolical fiend who caused all this trouble. My boy, daddy—my noble boy!"

She threw her arms impulsively around the old man's neck, buried her face in his shoulder, and sobbed softly.

"Jess," he said, repentantly, stroking



The girl crumpled upon her knees at the bedside.

her hair caressingly. "I—I thought I had every reason to suppose that all this trouble was due entirely to Dick's own stupid mismanagement and sheer incompetence."

"But all your reasons were based directly or indirectly on the statements of this intriguing, lying rogue, Markley. When you get at the facts, daddy, you will find that the trouble was all conceived in his evil brain, and executed under his insistent order in the face of the most determined remonstrance a subordinate may properly make to a superior—nay, executed, perhaps, under the very shadow of your own alleged sanction. But all this you can learn when Dick is well enough to talk."

The old man had broken away from her; and his trained eye was rapidly scanning each of the papers she had tossed upon the desk.

"I'll not wait for that," he muttered, grimly. "The fellow shall be convicted out of his own mouth; for I've never yet found the man from whose tongue I couldn't force the truth when I got to close quarters."

He looked at the tearful figure standing before him, and murmured slowly, almost as though speaking to himself:

"I'm afraid I've permitted myself to be influenced to the point of blindness by those whom it is a species of duty for me to trust. But the trust has been shamefully betrayed—and I know how to deal with treason. Dick hasn't had—well, he hasn't had a square deal."

"No, daddy, he hasn't. In fact, he's had no deal at all—barring raw deals!"

There was a long pause; and then, as though suddenly concluding to reveal something of which she had not intended to speak, she whispered into his ear:

"Daddy, perhaps, after all, you should know. This—this thing, to whom you, in your old-fashioned, open-hearted trust, extended the hospitality of your home, admitting him, along with Dick and others to your family circle; this low adventurer, who unscrupulously sought his own profit and advancement through the iniquitous destruction of everything and everybody about him; had the impudence, even while plotting the usurpation of my father, to insist upon my becoming Mrs. Markley."

The old man's eyes widened in astonishment, as he queried, "And you answered him—what?"

"When he would not drop the subject after a polite refusal, I lost my temper at last, and told him—I fear contemptuously—to discuss the matter with Dick Benton, to whom I belonged forever. But he presumed to urge me, even after that; and finally dared to say, as he departed one day in a towering rage, "I usually succeed in my fixed purposes—in spite of human or other obstacles; and I'm certain you'll yet come to terms."

The girl's whole figure quivered with passionate scorn as she repeated the words; while something like a faint, grim smile flitted over the president's features, and a light of sudden comprehension illuminated his face.

"Now," he muttered, thoughtfully, "the whole previously inexplicable situation is clear to me! And so, Jess, you are 'the woman in the case,' eh? My own daughter is the innocent cause of all this trouble of mine!"

"But it isn't my fault, daddy! I despised him, and he had no affection for me—he's utterly incapable of that. I was simply one item in his infernal machinations for his own aggrandizement. But he is capable of devilish hatred; I saw it plainly in his eyes when, perceiving that he believed I feared him, I laughed in his face, dared him to do his worst, and told him that the only emotion curs could inspire in thoroughbreds was contempt. But I was wrong, daddy, for he has inspired me with something else; I—I hate him, I hate him, I HATE him! Oh, daddy, I—I could kill him!"

The old man gathered the heaving form into his arms, and said gently: "Jess, dear, why didn't you give me some inkling of this—this persecution?"

"I didn't want to take any unfair personal or business advantage of him through my relationship to you. Besides, believing that my wits were at least as good as his, I—I wanted to prove to him my scorn by treating the matter with complete indifference. But he hasn't played fair, daddy, he hasn't played fair; and—and—oh, he'll wish he had let Dick alone!"

"There, there!" soothed the old man, tenderly stroking the quivering head. Then he stooped and whispered in her ear, "It's very plain, Jess, that this company is badly in need of that boy of yours!"

For a long time he remained silent, the lines of his face gradually hardening, a cold glitter growing in his eyes, and an expression she had always feared creeping over his features.

"Jessie," he exclaimed at last, in a harsh, changed tone, "leave me now, girl, and go home. I have disagreeable work to do."

She had scarcely reached the street when, in response to the president's summons, Markley entered the office.

"Be seated, sir!" courteously invited the superior, waving a hand coldly toward a large armchair, while he walked to the door, closed it, locked it, and deliberately dropped the key in his pocket.

Then, striding to the desk and seizing the incriminating documents, he turned his white, grim countenance upon the wondering general manager, and the two faced each other, man to man.

An hour afterward, as Jessie sat at home in the livingroom, she was called on the telephone. She knew the voice instantly—in spite of its strange inflections and a tense incisiveness of tone which, somehow, made her think of flashing, steel scimeters.

"That you, girl?"

"Yes, daddy."

"I've just posted notices of the dismissal of Markley and the appointment of Dick as general manager of this company. I shall see that the board confirms both procedures at its meeting next week."

Before she could make any comment, he had dashed his receiver into the disconnecting hook, and was gone. But the primal instincts that verved the old man's quivering voice stole into the girl's responsive being, and those menacing scimeters continued to flash before her vision.

Action was the only relief for the feeling that assailed her; so, five minutes later, her car was again in service. She made a rapid round of calls that ended in the downtown section half an hour before the close of banking hours; then she returned smiling to the house.

Each afternoon found Jess at Rutledge Haven; and, as the days sped by, Dick made rapid strides toward perfect recovery.

"Jess," he said once, "I want you to meet a friend I've made here, one of the patients, an old gentleman to know whom is almost worth my confinement in this place. He has seen much of life; and we have something or other in common that has enabled us to become strangely intimate in a short time. He's been here, now, for ten years as a mental incurable, yet I'm certain he has as sound and well-balanced a mind as nature ever bestowed upon a man. He's a hero, Jess; in fact, more than that, for heroes aren't usually saintly. I've succeeded in worming from him, in sacred confidence, the guarded admission that he is an affluent man, confined here through the intrigues of covetous relatives, led and inspired by his clever, unscrupulous son. When, years ago, the old fellow awoke to a full realization of their wickedness and duplicity, he deliberately reconciled himself to ending his days here rather than attempt any exposure of those whom he loved in spite of the irreparable wrong they had inflicted upon him. He was devoted to the son; and he chose to sacrifice himself in preference to causing a disgraceful scandal that would not only ruin the boy, but perhaps also handicap the lives of the innocent children of the old man's daughters."

"Oh, Dick," she exclaimed, "it is too horrible for belief!"

"Unfortunately, many horrible things are strictly true," he said, sadly.

"But," she urged, "possibly we can quietly do something for him after you leave here."

"That's just why I've let you into Mr. Oliver's secret, Jess, and why I want you to meet him."

The day that Dick was discharged from treatment was a joyful one for him and Jessie. Bidding their lovable, interesting old friend farewell on the great porch, and promising soon to visit him, they clambered into a waiting carriage and drove away from the somber institution.

As they neared the wide entrance gate, another carriage slowly passed them, coming up the driveway. The windows of both vehicles were open; and they beheld, reclining upon one of the seats of the passing carriage, a man with a pale, distorted face and wild, hunted, staring eyes. Beside him sat two professional-looking men, alert and watchful. Dick turned his head away, and Jess hid her face on his shoulder. It was Markley!

And, at just about the same time, Dick's "children" were pouring out of the mill after a day of toil; for, upon the day following that on which the new notices were posted, the men had joyfully returned to their looms with "the old man himself on the job," and a promise that their grievances should be "fairly adjusted as soon as Mr. Benton was well enough to resume charge of the plant."

One of the workmen, with white hair and a step less agile than that of his fellows, had fallen behind the moving stream, but a towering man kept at his side, and the two were conversing earnestly.

They stopped and bought a paper from a newsboy who had accosted them on the corner.

"Here it is!" said the old man, with his finger on a headline. "You see, it's all true; Markley has been caught in the stock market to the tune of a hundred thousand dollars, and is ruined."

"I've got no pity for him, Bill," growled the big man, unsympathetically.

Bill edged close to his companion, and turning his mouth upward toward the other's ear, spoke from the experience of age.

"Jerry," he said, in a subdued, oracular tone, "to finish what I started to say before we stopped: it's always a foolhardy thing to buck a woman's wit; but to run afoul of a woman's love means a coffin or a madhouse."

And yet, wise as old Bill undoubtedly was, he little recked the full significance of the words he uttered.

A week later, Dick and Jessie drove to the institution to pay their promised visit to Mr. Oliver; but an attendant with whom Dick had become intimate shook his head in answer to their inquiries, and explained confidentially:

"No, Mr. Benton, Mr. Oliver is no longer with us. The day you left, we received another patient, a Mr. Markley. When he saw the newcomer arrive, Mr. Oliver, after bidding you farewell, was still standing on the porch, and he fainted as he saw the man taken out of the carriage. The old gentleman must have had a weak heart, sir; for, do what the doctors would, they couldn't pull him around, and he died that evening. The attack was undoubtedly brought on by shock. You see, in arranging his affairs after his death, it came to light that he had been here all the time under an assumed name. His true name was Markley, and it turned out that the new patient was his son."

On the way back, they rode for some time in silence; but at last Dick said thoughtfully:

"One would think, Jess, that a man of Markley's undoubted brains should be able to see that crookedness and wickedness can never pay, or even succeed, in the long run."

"I don't know," she murmured, with practical dubiousness. "Sometimes I think you're a little too idealistic for your own good, Dick—though its one of the things I love to see in you. Now, it seems to me he stood an excellent chance of succeeding in his nefarious schemes, barring the accidental tipsy garrulity of his minions—which led indirectly to my own subsequent strenuous interference."

"Ah, but that's just it! Those seemingly 'accidental' happenings are constantly the undoing of confident rogues. Then you've overlooked, too, the adverse market movement of the stock he tried to manipulate; the unexpectedly prompt action of his brokers in selling him out, and his consequent financial ruin."

"No," she retorted, glancing at him askance as though in momentary doubt, then concluding in favor of perfect candor; "no, I didn't overlook it; but that was not 'accidental.' As soon as I learned that he had lost the position upon which he had undoubtedly been trading, and knew for a certainty that the company's trouble was all over, I hastened to a number of available investing friends of mine, and urged them to place orders with T. A. Binney & Co., his brokers, for the purchase of the company's stock, at any price up to a specified point substantially beyond the current figure to which the strike had depressed it. Then I hurried to the office of that firm, and personally gave an order of my own. Of course, I knew how strongly and closely the stock of our company is held, and was perfectly aware that buying orders were therefore not likely to attract any appreciable amount of stock on a prosperous, rising market. Incidentally, I mentioned, while at Binney's, that the company was in a splendid financial condition, that the strike was over, and that Mr. Markley's connection with the concern had ceased. This information—which they accepted as semi-official, coming from the daughter of the president—together with the bids which I had inspired, and which were already coming in, produced the rising market. Markley, who had extensively sold short during the brief period of the company's apparent disaster, was badly caught in this turn of the tide—and the brokers very properly took no chances with him after he had lost the important position that was his principal recommendation to their confidence."

"Jess!" gasped Dick, in utter astonishment. "Of course, I knew that as the only child of a progessive man like your father, you had been trained to understand such business matters as few women ever do; yet even I should never have suspected your hand in that end of this strange, clever, ruthless game of Markley's. Well, well! Poor——"

"No, no! Don't say it!" she besought, seizing his arm restrainingly in both hands, and gazing earnestly into his face. "He was a loathsome viper! A fiend in human form! Oh, Dick!" and she shuddered violently, while her half-veiled eyes filled again with the menace of that sullen gleam, as she hid her face against his shoulder—"suppose—suppose you—had died! No, no! If Markley recovers, he may well feel thankful that he got off so cheaply!"

The End.

* * *

The Old Home Paper.

"Judge Gray and his wife had a mess of green beans from their own garden Thursday. Sunday they expect to have new potatoes, new peas and more beans from their garden."

That was the first item under the head of "Local News" in one of the old home papers. You read something like it in the paper you receive from "back yonder," no doubt, and you are interested, too. You remember Judge Gray and his wife, of course. They live down a shady street in the west part of the old town, and there is an old board walk in front of the little frame house and a big garden "patch" in the rear.

The judge used to be police judge of the town—that is where he got his title—and he was one of the "prominent citizens." Now he gets his name in the paper once every year—when he has the first "mess" of "garden truck."

Maybe the experts of the big city papers do not call that news, but that is because they never lived in a small town, where the local editor announces every week that "news is scarce." It is one of the real big news items in the city, and the folks who get the old home paper like to read it. It is the reading that really links the old days with the present.

Then you turn to the "Personal Mention." Here is the first item in the column:

"Bill Johnson took the train north this morning. He will return on the evening train."

Now, that kind of an item couldn't get into the city paper, of course. The city editor would ask the cub reporter what "Bill" meant by taking the train north, or why he didn't take it south. Anyway, the item would be thrown into the waste basket, along with the most of the contributions of the cub reporter. But if that item had been left out of the Weekly Review a subscriber would have been lost and the editor would have annexed a new enemy in the community.

Further down the column there is this one:

"J. Walter Brinkley dropped in on his folks from out West this morning. "Spot" Brinkley will be remembered by his old friends here. He left town about eight years ago and is now working on a ranch in Colorado and doing well, so we are informed. We are glad to hear that another of our town boys is making good in the world."

Of course, you remember "Spot" Brinkley. It is worth the subscription price of the old home-paper—$1.00 the year—to hear from that freckled-faced kid and to know that he has "made good," even to making an acceptable "hand" on a ranch. You never expected to read anything about "Spot" Brinkley outside of the court records.

Here is another item, also, that interested you:

"George Rankin met with an accident that might have proved serious last Saturday. He had a small sore on the small finger and poured turpentine over it to aid in healing. On lighting his trusted pipe the rag caught fire and his hand was burned considerably, raising a blister half as big as a croquet ball."

Maybe you have forgotten some of the old folks of the town where you used to live. If you have you may find the entire city directory in a single item in the old home paper. Like this one, for instance:

"Last week, in mentioning the birth of a daughter to Mr. and Mrs. Ed Sherman, we said Mrs. Sherman was a daughter of Mrs. Susan Jones. We were misinformed. She is the oldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Jones and is a niece of John Jones and Mrs. Will Graham and a cousin of Mrs. Winfield Scott."

For the old home paper is nothing if not accurate. That is one reason you read it with such interest each week. You know if it gives you the wrong information this week it will correct it next week, even if it is compelled to "stop the press to announce it."

* * *

He Yielded.

During a local election in a German town only one man appeared at the nomination desk.

"Whom do you nominate?" inquired the official.

"Myself," was the answer.

"Do you accept the nomination?"

"Well, no."

"Then we must try again. Whom do you nominate?"

"Myself."

"You accept the nomination?"

"No."

A subdued "Donnerwetter!" escaped the lips of the perplexed official, but he went on:

"For the third time, whom do you nominate?"

"Myself," came the invariable reply.

"Do you accept the nomination?"

The man rose with a smile of satisfaction spreading over his face and he answered proudly: "Having been three times solicited by my fellow-citizens to accept the nomination, I can no longer decline to accede to their wishes."

* * *

Better Not Inquire.

"Yes," said Swagger, "this is a turkeze ring."

"Excuse me," said Beggs, "the correct pronunciation of that word is 'turkwoise.'"

"No, 'turkeze,' excuse me."

"I say 'turkwoise.'"

"Well, let's go to a jeweler and ask him."

"Right."

"In order to settle a wager," said Swagger to the jeweler, "would you mind telling me if the correct pronunciation of the stone in this ring is 'turkeze' or 'turkwoise?'"

The jeweler took the ring and examined it carefully.

"The correct pronunciation," he said, "is 'glass.'"

* * *

Dissatisfied.

First Autoist—"I feel that I have lived in vain."

Second Autoist—"How so?"

First Autoist—"I have never gratified the ambition of my life—to run over a traffic policeman."

The Taxicab Robbery

Or, Celebrated Detective Achievements of Jack Spence, Reporter

By George T. Hargreaves

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CHAPTER I.

THE BLIND ASSIGNMENT.

I WAS just crawling out of bed after a late night's work on a graft story when the phone in my room got my blood to circulating. The man at the other end of the wire was that bane of my life—McCabe, the city editor of the Morning Star. McCabe was a genius at ferreting out news but, say, he was something of a slave driver, too. He expected a reporter to work just as hard and just as long as he did—he never thought about the difference in salaries. But you bet I told him occasionally when he got pushing me too hard.

"Come down, quick," he blared over the wire. "I'ye got a peach of a story. Another of those detective stunts for you."

"As soon as I can crawl into my clothes and get a drink," I answered.

"Never mind the drink," he shot back. He never did like boozers. "You'll need a clear head for this job. It's got the police in the air."

Well, I hustled all right. You know, I was rather coddling to these detective stunts. Helps a fellow's pay envelope, too. The office boosted me ten a week and gave me a bonus of fifty dollars when I cleared up the mystery of the second-story robberies.

You remember them. It was the case of that old recluse Hawthorne who'd trained an ape to run up balconies and rain pipes and porticos on the homes of rich guys. Then the ape 'ud drop a rope ladder he carried in his mouth and let Hawthorne climb up, jimmy into second-story windows, and sneak off jewels and gold galore.

Yes, I run him down, but I never got him in jail. He died from a shot either the cop Flannery or I fired at him. I gave Flannery the credit. I'm not stuck on being known as a man-killer. But I did gloat over killing the ape. The blamed thing had scratched and bitten me up until my face and neck were pretty well corrugated.

I never was any great shucks for beauty, but when I lamped that daughter of the old recluse, with her peachy cheeks and her fetching blue eyes—deep as the pools I used to fish in when I was a kid—I had a sort of gnawing in my chest for better looks.

"Well, we'll have to hire you a valet, Spence, if you can't dress any faster than this," was McCabe's salutation when I breezed into the office.

"Nothing's too good for me, boss," I pushed back at him.

"Quit your kidding and listen, kid," he warned me as he pulled up a chair beside his own and motioned me into it. "Two hours ago a taxicab containing two bank messengers with a grip holding twenty-five thousand dollars between them was held up a block from Broadway. The messengers were beaten with blackjacks and the grip with all the cash carried off. What do you think of that? Right in the heart of the business section with cops on nearly every corner. A regular Wild West stunt in broad daylight in New York City. And would you believe it?"—he tapped me on the knee—"the cops are so excited they're running round in circles."

"You're sure some clever faker isn't stringing you?" I pumped at him. "I'll admit truth is stranger than fiction—sometimes—but I ain't ready to agree that the blood-and-thunder stage of truth is here yet."

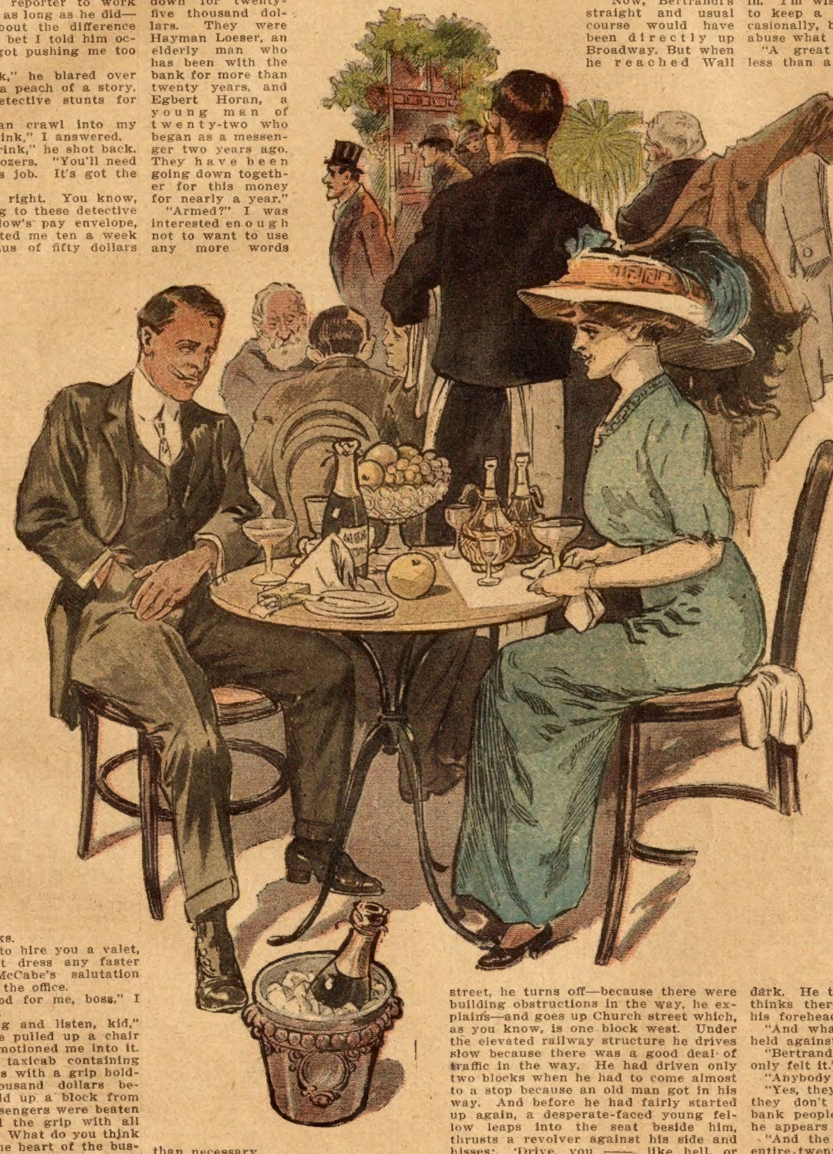
McCabe gave me a look that would have shriveled steel. It didn't affect me so you can see what a tough skin I've grown. But you've got to have one to get along in my business.

"Well, then tell it to me from the beginning," I thawed a bit to please him.

The city editor cleared his throat, took a long whiff at his cigarette, and with forefinger poised started his narrative.

"The West Side Bank is up at Sixth avenue and Ninth street, a good three miles from the financial district. Every Saturday morning it has been the custom to send down two messengers in a taxicab to bring up from fifteen to twenty-five thousand dollars from the Twentieth Century National Bank, its Wall street depositary. The money is for the payroll purposes of customers, and is ordinarily in medium-sized bills—fives, tens, and twenties.

"This morning two clerks were sent down for twenty-five thousand dollars. They were Hayman Loeser, an elderly man who has been with the bank for more than twenty years, and Egbert Horan, a young man of twenty-two who began as a messenger two years ago. They have been going down together for this money for nearly a year."



"Armed?" I was interested enough not to want to use any more words than necessary.

"One of them usually carries a revolver," answered McCabe, "but this morning both of them overlooked it."

I cocked an eye at the ceiling and pursed my lips at that.

"Oh, you don't need to be suspicious of them," explained the city editor. "There's mighty little chance either of them is involved. They were both badly beaten up. The old man has a possibly fractured skull. The young man has a serious gash in the side of his head. His face was blackjacked almost to a pulp. And they're both crying like a pair of kids over the loss of the money."

"And how did they lose it!" I just couldn't help butting in. Asking questions gets to be so blamed natural.

"Now don't get excited, kid," growled McCabe. "We'll get to all that in good time. To go down for the coin the bank called, as usual, a taxicab from the stand at the St. Albans Hotel in Broadway, four blocks away. The owner of the stand, Henri Bertrandi, responded. He's been doing the bank's taxi business for the last three years.

"Well, they drove down town, reaching the Twentieth Century Bank just at eleven o'clock. The two clerks went in and dumped the twenty-five thousand dollars into their bag. It was done up in three packages—ten thousand in twenties, ten thousand in tens, and five thousand in fives. They re-entered the cab and started back.

"Now, Bertrandi's straight and usual course would have been directly up Broadway. But when he reached Wall street, he turns off—because there were building obstructions in the way, he explains—and goes up Church street which, as you know, is one block west. Under the elevated railway structure he drives slow because there was a good deal of traffic in the way. He had driven only two blocks when he had to come almost to a stop because an old man got in his way. And before he had fairly started up again, a desperate-faced young fellow leaps into the seat beside him, thrusts a revolver against his side and hisses: 'Drive, you ——, like hell, or I'll bore you through!' "

"And like a good little boy, he drove," I couldn't help from injecting.

No matter how good my resolutions are, somehow my tongue is forever getting the better of me. And if there is anything in the world McCabe can't stand for, it's some one "butting in" when he is telling a story. But somehow I just couldn't help it that time.

"Yes, he drove," went on the city editor, with a scowl at the interruption. "But other things were happening in that cab. At the same instant that the man with the gun climbed to the chauffeur's seat, the door on each side of the cab was jerked open, and two huskies jumped in upon the two bank clerks, and with heavy blackjacks began to belabor them.

"And, mind you, all this was going on in a crowded city street, with not less than four policeman not more than a block away. The two clerks didn't put up much of a resistance. They admit it. They were too frightened. They both tried to cry out, but their mouths were closed by rough hands, until, by the beating, they were both practically insensible. Then the two thieves grabbed up the handbag of money, leaped from the cab, slammed the doors shut, and joined by the fellow beside the driver, made off with their booty."

"Made off where?" I promptly butted in. I'm wise to the fact that I ought to keep a padlock on my tongue occasionally, but really a fellow hates to abuse what he makes his living from.

"A great black touring car stood less than a hundred yards away from where the taxi had been held up. Into this the three thieves hustled, the man at the wheel turned on full speed, and the machine was lost to view before the taxi driver could attract the attention of the copper half a block away."

"What is the matter with the taxi driver? Is he dumb? Why didn't he yell sooner?"

"My dear Spence, if you'll only be patient, I'll get to that in time. He was afraid to make an outcry any sooner. The fellow with the gun had threatened to shoot him if he peeped before the thieves got out of sight. So he took no chances."

"And what did these three bold bandits look like?" I asked.

"The two mauled bank clerks were so surprised they did not have a good chance to look them over. But young Horan says the man who broke in on his side of the taxi wore no overcoat and had on a dark gray cap, that his hair was a deep red and his face florid. And that's all he knows."

"Would he recognize his voice?"

"Strange, but neither Horan nor Loeser remember that a single word was spoken. The only noise was that which came from the impact of the blackjacks upon their heads."

"And Bertrandi, how does he describe the robbers?"

"The fellow who got up beside him was dressed in black, overcoat and all, he says. His hair was black and his dangerous eyes dark. He took him for an Italian. He thinks there was a small scar across his forehead."

"And what kind of gun was this he held against the chauffeur's side?"

"Bertrandi didn't see it, he says; he only felt it."

"Anybody arrested?'

"Yes, they've locked up Bertrandi, but they don't think he's involved. The bank people speak highly of him, and he appears to be a square sort."

"And the thieves got away with the entire twenty-five thousand, eh?"

"Yes, twenty-five thousand, black bag and all."

CHAPTER II.

THE DINNER CLEW.

Say, it looked an easy one to me. I cleared the two bank clerks right off. The serious injuries they'd got showed they weren't in cahoots. To be sure, it looked rather queer that on this day they'd forgotten to take along their revolvers. But these fellows that handle heaps of money tell me that they get careless about it—come to think of it as they would a heap of cordwood. So these two clerks just naturally forgot to think about protecting their big bunch of "dough" on this occasion.

But Bertrandi, the chauffeur? Oh, he was in on the hold-up without a doubt, I decided. He had to be, or the gang of bandits wouldn't have known when he was going to drive down to the Twentieth Century Bank. And, too, this day he doesn't come back to the West Side Bank as usual through Broadway, but he takes another street where traffic isn't so heavy; another street, where the elevated structure darkens up things beneath it a bit. Why? He said because there was a pile of building material in Broadway. There are twenty piles of building material in Church street, where he chose to go up and get held up.

Oh, it looked like a pipe. Bertrandi surely had a hand in it. The police would put him through the "third degree" and know all about the hold-up before night.

So I told McCabe adding: "I'll go out on the story, but there's no use of my digging. The police will have the secret of it for us in plenty of time. Bertrandi will cough it up."

But that was where I was wrong. Bertrandi didn't cough up a thing, and the police gave it out that they thought he was a straight guy. So Jack Spence had to get to work. I knew it when I called up McCabe at four o'clock that afternoon and he told me the cops were balked. So I made a bee-line for Bertrandi's taxicab stand at the St. Albans Hotel. I just naturally couldn't think of that robbery without putting him in as a leader.

But they gave him a high name at the hotel. He'd been with them for six years, and they'd never had even an overcharge complaint against him. And in the taxi business, believe me, that's some recommendation. Of all the grafters in town, those taxi drivers are the worst.

Then I sauntered up to the little glass cage outside the hotel door where Bertrandi kept headquarters. A spruce young man was in charge. He had a sharp eye but a quiet tongue. No, Mr. Bertrandi wasn't around. Didn't know when he would be. Went away before noon and hadn't got back. No, he wasn't sick nor hurt. The fellow answered my quiz with as few words as possible, being careful not to indicate that his boss at that moment was locked up at police headquarters on suspicion of being involved in a sensational robbery.

Then I started out to ask a lot of fool questions. I hadn't any idea where they'd lead. But they started something.

Yes, Bertrandi was married. Lived with his wife in Waverly place, about three blocks away. Had a grown son and daughter. Both lived at home. What did the son do? Why, he helped his father occasionally. No, he didn't have any regular trade or business. Where was he now? Didn't know. He hadn't been about since before noon, and there was no telling where he could be found, although sometimes he hung out over in Denny the Scar's saloon in Sixth avenue.

So I made for Denny the Scar's saloon. It didn't have a savory name, and I found my opinion of Bertrandi's son lowering as I thought of him frequenting such a place. Thugs and convicts were known to use it as a hangout, and the police occasionally raided it as a "fence" for thieves.

On the way over I used the phone to call up Miss Hawthorne. What are you grinning at? Think I'm smitten, eh? Well, can't a fellow be decent to a girl occasionally? Besides, I felt as if I owed that young woman a debt I never could repay. Wasn't I responsible for the death of her crook of a father? I don't know how she ever forgave me for that. But she did, and, alone in the world, rather seemed to look to me for advice.

I'm not ashamed to say I had a sort of bubbling feeling in my heart when she answered me that she'd meet me down at Collani's, that bohemian Italian restaurant in Twenty-fourth street, for a table d'hote dinner. Anyway, I went along to the Scar's place with a mighty cheery face.

There was a bunch of ill-looking guys there in the bar, and more of them around the tables in the room in the rear. From the furtive way they were talking, I was wise to the fact that there was something doing in that part of the underworld. I braced a bartender to tell me if the son of Bertrandi was in the place. He looked me over snarlingly, and then jerked his head toward the rear room.

"At the fur corner table," he muttered.

I made for the "fur corner table." Two men sat drinking at it, one guzzling a big glass of beer and the other sipping from a goblet of wine. The beer drinker was crimson-faced, muscular, and brutal. The wine sipper was pallid, narrow-eyed and sinister. They were both young, yet I guessed the pale-face to be young Bertrandi—largely because he looked the more suspicious. Oh, I'm great on this intuition stuff! There's a lot more of it in successful detective work than a lot of these high-brow sleuths with the great names will admit. It's a part of their business, of course, to make their work look mysterious. It sounds bigger then, and it pays better. But between you and me there's a lot of hocus-pocus—not to use a stronger word—in some of the work these fellows do.

Anyway, I braced up to the pair I'd spotted. I was wise to the shrewd look the pale-face turned upon me. His dark blue eyes were like cold steel.

"I'm looking for a man named Bertrandi—son of the taxi man at the St. Albans Hotel," I started in.

"What for?" he asked gruffly and with curling lip.

"I'll tell him when I find him," I retorted boldly.

"Well, you don't need to look any farther," pale-face growled.

"Why?" I spoke crossly, because, although I felt a bit squeamish about the surroundings, I knew the best thing to carry me through was a show of nerve. I've got plenty of that.

"Because he's here."

"You're the guy, eh?" I asked, putting all the meanness into my voice that I could.

"That's me," he snarled back. "What do you want?"

"I suppose you know your dad is pinched," I said deliberately, watching his face narrowly.

I saw just the ghost of a grimace. It told me two things: First, that he already knew of the elder Bertrandi's arrest, and second, he didn't appear to have a trace of regret.

"For what?" he blurted, in feigned surprise.

"Helping to rob a couple of bank messengers in his taxicab out of about twenty-five thousand dollars," I plunked boldly at him, leaning over so that I could see the red veins in the whites of his eyes.

He neither blinked nor wavered. But one corner of his thin lips curled cruelly. It flashed through my mind that I'd hate to meet this fellow alone in the dark. I had seen many sinister, cruel faces, but never one that affected me more.

"What's that got to do with me?" he frowned crossly.

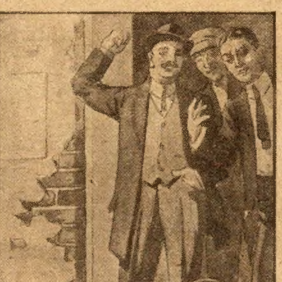
"You ought to be interested when your dad is in trouble," I shot back.

At the same time I was conscious of a movement behind me. Young Bertrandi's table companion had risen and stood gloweringly at my side. But I wasn't going to turn around to show the young fellow that I was a bit alarmed by my surroundings. Inwardly, however, I'll have to admit I had an uneasy feeling. I was sure that if I had had eys in the back of my head I would have seen a half dozen of the tough figures in the room closing in on me.

"Well, what business is it of yours?" Bertrandi growled.

"I thought you were the kind of a son to want to try to help your father in trouble," I said, sort of defiantly. I felt my back rising in anger at the cold-bloodedness of the youngster.

"What's that? What's that?" he flared.



They dumped me on the rough pavement of the alley.

"What business is it of yours how I treat the old man?"

"So much my business that I'm going to let the public knew about you," I flaunted back.

Maybe it was unwise, but I've something of a temper myself, and that young fellow's lack of feeling certainly stirred me up. Moreover, I didn't like the way he ducked talking about the robbery. I got the idea that he was edging away from a subject he knew more about than he was willing to admit.

At my last thrust, he looked up at me with a question in his eyes. Then a new light came into them. With it came a new venom.

"A newspaper reporter, eh?" he rasped. "And you think you can find something on me, eh?" He got up and nodded toward the gang behind me. "Hey, fellows, this guy's going to tell all about us in the papers. What a nerve, eh?"

A growl was the answer. I slid my hand toward my hip pocket where I had taken the precaution to slip a snub-nosed automatic revolver. But my hand did not close on the weapon. Instead my arms were seized roughly from behind, and I was jerked backward so violently that I lost my balance and slipped to the floor.

I was so angry I could have bitten the curs. But I didn't get a chance. Glowering down at me, a half-dozen of the crime-grained faces laughed raucously at my predicament. Then, before I could scramble to my feet, half a dozen hands gripped my clothes, and, hoisting me carelessly, carried me to a side door and dumped me with unnecessary violence upon the rough stone pavement of a narrow alleyway.

I could hear their hoarse gloat as they slammed the door shut behind me. But it took just that treatment to get me properly started on my assignment. I'd been kind of lukewarm on the job before, but now, sore in both body and spirit as the result of this indignity to my person from a gang of crooks, I rankled with a desire to get even—and then some.

CHAPTER III.

A SQUINT AT THE LOOT.

Some people that know me say I'm a fool for luck. They've never given me any credit for the things I've done that seemed to deserve some consideration. They just appear to think I fell into them—that anybody could have done what I did with the same chance. Well, maybe that's so. Sometimes I'm inclined to take that view of myself. But I don't keep it long. If I did, I'd never get much more tacked onto my salary. Remember that, boy.

But it did look mighty fortunate for me when, after Gertrude and I had been contentedly eating at a little secluded table in Collani's and occasionally listening to the ragtime music turned loose by the orchestra, who should come stalking arrogantly in but the guy I had had the set-to with only an hour previous—young Bertrandi.

He had a mighty pretty girl with him. She was petite and graceful, with cheeks of natural pink, a piquant little mouth, an engaging smile, but cold blue eyes that were half-sinister, half-defiant. I knew at once that she was the kind of a woman who would trail with a band of thugs and glory in the association. The pair fortunately took a seat where both Gertrude and I could watch them without being observed ourselves.

"Study both of them well," I said to her, after I had explained my assignment; for it had come to me in a flash that I might be able to use her. Demure and retiring as she was, I nevertheless knew that she had an indomitable spirit that might be of service in my work.

Bertrandi ordered extravagantly. He wasn't satisfied with anything on the regular bill of fare, but wanted a batch of extras. His wine bill mounted too. Both of them started off with a couple of cocktails, emptied a couple of bottles of Chianti and then proceeded to imbibe hilarity from a couple of quarts of champagne. Their meal had all the appearance of a jollification.

"Gertrude," I whispered, leaning far over to look into her deep, limpid eyes, "how'd you like to give me a hand in this little job?"

"You mean to act as your assistant—detective?" she asked in a half-pant, and with a faint flush climbing her pale cheeks.

I nodded, rather embarrassed—for me. I guess I've told you before what an awful nerve I've accumulated after ten years in the newspaper business.

"I don't know," she answered, with a cute little jerk of her pretty head. "Do you think I'm up to it?"

"Sure," I said, assuredly. "There won't be anything much to do. Just a bit of shadowing—of following a certain young woman we see here now."

When I said there wouldn't be anything much for her to do, I really believed it. If I'd known that she would have to go through that streak of experiences that later befell her, you can believe me that I'd never have asked her help. But I was mighty proud of her after them, just the same. If ever a girl proved herself a brick—but there, I'm getting ahead of myself.

"You think she may know something about the robbery?" Gertrude asked.

"I don't know. But if she's toting around with him she'll bear watching. Besides, you'll notice she's got a lot of new togs. She's been talking about them to him and admiring herself in that new hat by looking all the time into the mirror behind him. Now, you'll notice that's a mighty expensive hat, great plumes, gold braid and all—too expensive for a girl like her to buy."

"I had noticed the discrepancy, yes," she answered, thoughtfully. "And did you notice how boisterous she is?"

"Wine, too much wine," I said, shortly. I didn't like the idea of a young woman making such a display of herself before a girl I was out with. I felt as if I

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didn't want Gertrude to know about such vulgarity and looseness.

Snickering again, eh? Think I'm gone on her, eh? Well, let me tell you she's a mighty fine girl—the finest I ever knew—and I'm not ashamed to say that's the kind of a girl I'd like to have for my wife—that is, if I could ever bring myself to the idea of getting married.

But I don't suppose I will. I've been batting around too long. Couldn't settle down into a respectable married man now. Besides, my business is against it—all sorts of hours and meeting all sorts of people isn't the kind of a life a young wife wants her young husband to lead.

"And look," I went on, directing Gertrude's gaze toward Bertrandi. "He is going to pay his bill. Watch that roll of money he is fondling."

It was a roll, too. He drew it with difficulty out of his trousers pocket. It was so fat that he could barely get his hand about it. And as he peeled off the outer cover, which was a crisp twenty-dollar bill, I noted that the bill beneath was also marked with a double X.

"All twenties, it seems," I whispered. "Quite a bundle of money for a young man who doesn't do any regular work to be possessed of."

Gertrude nodded as I paused. I could see her mind was working on the same idea that was busy in my noodle.

"Rather proud of flashing it, isn't he?" I continued, quietly. "Probably never had such a big one before. He'll doubly bear watching now, eh?"

"I certainly want to help now," she leaned across the table to tell me in an undertone. The perfume of her soft breath rather intoxicated me, I guess, for I shut my hand down over her soft fingers and crushed them. My heart got to thumping when she didn't withdraw them. Instead her eyes drooped shyly, and a vivid pink mounted again in her white cheeks. Yes, fellows, I was getting pretty badly hit.

"I'm really excited about it," Gertrude went on, hurriedly. "We'll follow them, I suppose?"

"We certainly will," I assured her, making preparations to leave the place.

"And if they separate, it will be my part to follow the girl," my companion volunteered, with a determined flash of the eye.

"That's it exactly," I responded. She'd taken the words out of my mouth.

At a distance, we followed Bertrandi and his companion. They turned into Sixth avenue, stopping before a cafe. The young man entered, but came out in a moment, slipping a flask into his pocket. His thirst for liquor apparently wasn't satisfied.

At less than a half-block's distance we trailed the couple down to Twenty-first street. Here they turned west between two rows of red brick rooming-houses. They stopped before a three-story building, dingy and forlorn. With a hilarious adieu, the girl mounted the high wooden steps and digging a key out of her dangling purse inserted it in the lock with some difficulty. Opening the door, she disappeared within the house.

"Leave me," Gertrude whispered, as she drew her hand from my arm. "I want to do this alone."

"Do what?"

"See that sign," she said, pointing to a square card of white hanging in a basement window.

I read hastily "Maid wanted. Apply within," and turned to my companion in astonishment.

"Yes, I am," she began to argue, reading the objection in my mind. "I'm going to apply for the position. It'll get me inside, and then it won't be difficult to learn something about this young woman."

And despite my protests she descended the stone steps that led to the basement door. That was the last I saw of her for five hours, and there wasn't a minute of them that I wasn't worrying my heart out about her. But I'd worried more if I'd known what she was undergoing.

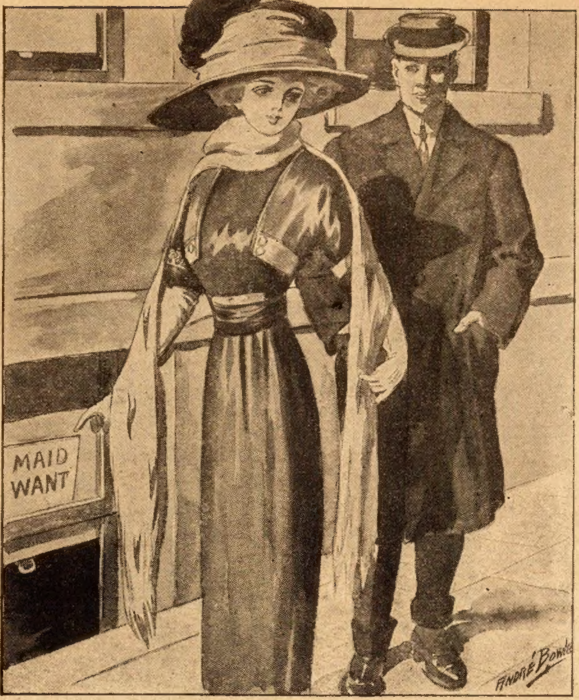
I went on after Bertrandi. He was traveling with a slight unsteadiness in his step. He went as far west as Eighth avenue, turned south, and then went west again almost to the pier line. Midway in a block of tumble-down shacks he disappeared in the door of a saloon.

I was right after him now and entered just as, after a word with the man behind the bar, he went through a door in the rear. I followed him through the crowd of beetling-browed patrons of the place. As he reached the top of a narrow, creaking stairway and opened a door, I heard the angry clatter of voices.

When he had entered and closed the door behind him, I crawled as quietly as I could to the top of the steps. I did not need to press my ear to the wood to hear all that was said within. Cracks in the door were so wide that I could also see every move.

An oath, long, foul and uttered with a venomous voice, was followed with the words: "I'll get more for my share if I have to fight for it."

Peering through a crack I took in the remarkable scene. On an unsteady wooden table lay heaped a pile of greenbacks larger than I had ever seen in my life before. Around the table was grouped a motley crew of men. The fading daylight was bad, coming in as it did through a high, square window coated thickly with cobwebs and dust. But by it I had a chance to see the faces of the disputants. Lolling against the far wall, indolent, yet keen to every move, was a tall, broad-shouldered fellow with an old bruise just beneath his left eye. I could not recall at first where I had seen him. Then it came to me with a jump when I saw him raise his right arm and clench his mighty fist. He was Clem Broderic, a second-class prize fighter whom I had seen only two weeks before badly mauled by another bruiser in a Madison Square Garden contest. I had witnessed the blow under the eye that had felled Broderic with pile-driving force and left him spent and sanguinary.



"See that sign?"

Three other men in the room showed they had not the pugilist's strength, but their faces betrayed far more cunning. They were the hagglers. Each one stood over the heap of currency upon the table and looked and spoke anger. One of them even edged his fingers toward a revolver that lay beside the money. Another, red-haired and florid-faced saw the move, and pushed the weapon beneath the heap of bills.

Then flashed upon me the description the city editor had given me of two of the bandits. One, he had said, was tall and dark with a scar, according to the cab driver, Bertrandi. That would fit Broderic. Any man in a hurry and excitement would be likely to take the bruise beneath the eye for a scar.

Moreover, if the cab driver had given so good a description of the thug who had awed him, it struck me that would be a sign that he wasn't involved. If he had been, his game would have been to give a false description and thus throw off the police. But if the father wasn't involved, how did it happen that the son was apparently so deep in the plot?

I hadn't time just then to pursue that line of investigation. Through the crack in the door I saw other things developing.

"Quit your barking," young Bertrandi ordered the disputants gruffly. "D'you want all outdoors to know what we've got cooped up here?"

"But there ain't a square divvy here," answered the guy with the red top. "There's a thousand gone from the pile. There's only twenty-four thousand left. An' we agreed there'd be no divvy till tonight. Now, I wants to know who swiped the thousand," and he looked defiantly around the room.

"I took it," returned Bertrandi, boldly, "for expenses. I had to have some cash. I'm entitled to it. Didn't I get the steer? Where'd you coves been if I hadn't tipped the thing off? Do you think I'm going to be satisfied with an equal stake? Not on your life!"

"Ain't, eh?" spoke up red head, with an ugly curl of his thick lips. "And why not? Didn't we do all the dirty work? All you had to do was to sit back in a autymobile till we comes with the swag and then drive us away. If we'd a' been pinched, you'd 'a' got away. We'd had to fight, to shoot, mebbe to plunk somebody with a forty-four. But you—you was safe all the time. An' you got the nerve to stan' there an' tell us you got more comin' than we hev'. Not if Bill Braggins knows himself. We're divvying share and share alike."

"That's right, Lon," put in the prize-fighter, nodding to Bertrandi. "It ain't goin' to be nothin' but share and share alike."

"The same here," echoed the third man.

Bertrandi ripped out an oath that made even me, hardened as I am, creep a bit. With it he whipped out a forbidding-looking automatic revolver and covered his three pals.

"If you cusses move, I'll bore you through!" he hissed.

Then, leaning over, he tucked into his pockets and then then behind his vest front all the bills for which there was room. He put away fully half the pile.

"Time for me to get out and call the cops," I thought to myself.

But I could scarcely turn from the door before it was swung violently open. I paused to look around, and beheld Bertrandi backing out of the room and still covering his pals with his weapon.

"Mind, if you move," he kept repeating, "I'll bore you through."

And then he bumped into me, stooping over as I was, and, tumbling backward, sprawled head first to the foot of the narrow stairs.

Ticklish place for me, eh? As I rose to my full height after the jar from Bertrandi's fall, I found myself, not exactly between the devil and the deep sea, but between three devils on on side and one devil on the other. And believe me, I never want to face such a combination again.

For advancing on me from the little room were the three thugs, the foremost with a revolver pointed directly at my head, while peering up at me from below I saw the shining eyes of the cabman's son. And in the light of his venomous eyes I beheld the glint of his gun barrel, also pointed directly at me.

So there were only two ways for me to go, and both ways were blocked with bullets. Not a pleasant prospect, let me tell you. But I managed to keep my wits. I didn't want to run, because I've always had a horror of being shot in the back. If I'm going to be pecked with a pill from an automatic, I want to get the dose facing it.

Hence, I just couldn't turn and run. Instead, I dropped to my knees and lunging forward I grabbed the foremost man from the room, who happened to be red top, about the knees and jerked him down. I tried to wrench away the revolver, but before I could get my hands upon it that big slugger of a Broderic was upon me.

He caught me a wallop on the side of the head that dizzied me for an instant—just long enough for the three of them to set upon me and draw me savagely back into the room. Bertrandi joined them at once. A common danger rep-

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resented in yours truly, made them a united band again. I was to be the sufferer now.

I was set upon my feet and pushed back against the wall. Two revolvers were thrust so closely at me that one muzzle grazed my face and the other rumpled my shirt front. There was murder in the eyes of all four of the men. They cursed me picturesquely and plentifully. I grinned back. I just couldn't help it. It struck me as funny that those four guys, three of them uneducated scum, had a vocabulary when it came to cusswords that would delight the heart of any angry man.

Bertrandi, scanning me closely in the gray light, burst out: "It's the same guy that braced me down in Denny the Scar's this afternoon."

"So 'tis," assented he of the red hair, with an oath.

"An' blamed clever he is," said the young man, "to run us down like this. He's too dangerous to be allowed at large."

"Right you are," nodded Broderic. "He'll have us behind bars if we don't look out."

"No, he won't," snarled Bertrandi. "He's had his chance at us. We won't give him another."

"Let me plunk him one, then," urged red top. "I'll bet a thousand of the swag that I won't miss the very middle of his heart."

You can bet I wasn't smiling any more just about then. But I wasn't crying either. I can be game, if I do say it myself. But something else other than my own peril was disturbing me. I found myself thinking more about the little girl I had left less than an hour before. I began to fear acutely for her safety. If I could run into such agonizing danger with this gang, mightn't she also be facing similar trouble at the hands of the young woman—brazen and profligate—whom she had undertaken to follow? I couldn't think about her long, however. Something new sprang up in my own situation.

"No," said Bertrandi, authoritatively, to the suggestion of Braggins. "We can't afford to risk any shooting here. It might bring down the police. We must find some other way."

"Let's have a council—a council of war, we'll call it, then," spoke up Broderic. "Let's argue out what we'll do with this fresh guy—each man for his own way."

"A good idea," acquiesced Bertrandi, and he proceeded to show his interest by emptying his clothes of the money he had stowed away in them. Then he pushed the heap of currency into a close pile in the middle of the table and sprang upon it as a seat.

"I'll be the judge," he went on with a grin, as he glanced furtively at me, still covered by the revolver of Braggins, "and when you're all through, I'll have my say. An then we'll take a vote, and the way of disposing of this guy that gets the most votes we'll adopt for making away with him. Is that agreeable to you all?"

They all assented grimly.

"And, of course," he continued, glancing at me with a sour face, "you'll be satisfied with whatever we decide?"

"The devil I will!" I blurted.

Whereat they all laughed raucously.

"But I tell you what I will be willing to do," I said, defiantly.

"Spit it out," growled the young leader.

"I'll agree to take you on one at a time at any game you like—shooting, with the fists, in a wrestle, or at cards," I declared, doggedly, "and the man that beats me can choose his own way at ending me."

The four plotters looked at one another in surprise.

"He's game anyway," grunted Broderic.

Then they all laughed sinisterly.

"You ain't goin' to get that much of a chance, guy," declared Braggins. He waved the revolver closely about my head. "You ain't goin' to get any chance at all. D'y' understand, no chance at all."

"And you call yourselves sports, eh?" I taunted them. "A fine kind of sports that won't give a fellow and up-and-up chance for his breath."

"Aw, let's cut out the gab," broke in Braggins. "Let's get this thing settled an' off our chests."

"All right," agreed Bertrandi gayly. "On with the arguments. You start it, Broderic. You're the peacefullest of the bunch. The farther we go, the savager we'll get."

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* * *

Fled from Death.

We questioned the applicant for a position as laundress.

"Are you married?" we asked.

"No, suh. I'se a widdah."

"Ah—and your husband is dead?"

"Yassuh—he's sho' daid."

"How did he meet his death?"

"Meet it? Laws, man, he didn't meet it! Dey had ter chase him two miles fo' dey-all could ketch him an' put de rope roun' his neck."

Accommodating.

Hemenway was leaning against the door frame of his general store, chewing tobacco and surveying the countryside with a mildly approving gaze. A hot, dusty and disgusted motorist slowly limped up the road to the Hemenway establishment.

"Well, for the love of Mike!" he gasped as he sank down on the steps leading to the platform in front of the store. "Why didn't you move a few miles farther into the country? Then nobody could find you. You certainly have all the trade around here in your hands!"

"Have to walk a spell to get here?" asked Hemenway, almost sympathetically.

"Walk?" echoed the man with the goggles on his forehead. "Why, I've been plowing through dust for the last two hours and a half and everybody I met told me that your store was about half a mile down the road. Wasn't this country ever surveyed? Its doesn't look to me as if anybody around here knew a half-mile when he saw it."

Hemenway smiled dispassionately at the other's sarcasm. "Was there somethin' you wanted?" he inquired.

"Say, you don't think I came twenty miles up this confounded dust heap of a road to admire the scenery, do you?" demanded the motorist. "I want some gasoline and I'm just figuring on how I can beat lugging a five gallon can all the way back to where the car is stalled. One gallon is more than plenty to run her up to here—then I can have that blamed old tank filled until it runs over at the top. You put me up a gallon of juice in a bottle or something——"

Hemenway stopped him with upraised hand. "Ain't got no gasoline," he said. "Don't keep it."

The man with dust coat and with dust to go with it collapsed against the wall. "What?" he yelled. "You mean to tell me that you don't carry gasoline when you've got the only store for twenty miles around and dozens of automobiles need it every day? What's the matter with you?"

The storekeeper reached inside the door, rolled out an empty keg and sat down on it. Then he crossed his legs and leaned an elbow comfortably on his knee.

"Well," he said, "I used to keep gasoline here just to be accommodatin', but I found it was no good."

"Accommodating, nothing!" snapped the tourist. "I'm paying for everything I get."

"That's all right, too," said Hemenway. "But it amounted only to an accommodation, keepin' gasoline around here. When them automobiles began tearin' through this country one slowed up here about once a week and asked for gasoline.

"'Ain't got none,' I says to 'em. 'Ain't no call for it hereabouts.'

"'Should think you'd keep some fer an accommodation,' most of 'em says. That got me to thinkin'. I'm an accommodatin' man, nacherally. I'd go as far out of my way as the next feller to do a good turn fer a feller, so I decided to be accommodatin'. I laid in fifty gallons of gasoline. Went along fer a year or so and I sold almost four gallons to fellers that heard I was carryin' it and wanted it fer their wives to take spots out of their overcoats. I kep' the stuff out in the barn and one night the young feller I had helpin' around went out there to sneak a smoke on me, and the next thing the hull country knowed he was a-smokin'. Barn went up."

"That was tough," said the motorist, sympathetically.

"Well, I didn't like the idee of people thinkin' I wasn't accommodatin'," Hemenway continued, "so when a drummer come around the next spring and explained that I ought to have a patent tank sunk underneath the ground to keep my gasoline in so's it couldn't explode or anything, I let his firm put in one of the patent tanks for $75 and then I got another fifty gallons of gasoline."

The motorist, cooled off a bit, nodded encouragingly. "You certainly were accommodating," he admitted.

"Well, I aim to be," admitted Hemenway. "I thought if you automobile fellers came out our road and found I didn't have any gasoline you would take it as unneighborly in me. So I got in another fifty gallons. 'Twasn't more'n six or seven months later that a feller in one of them cars stopped here and wanted ten gallons of gasoline. I went out to the patent tank to pump it up for him and blamed is she wasn't as dry as your hand. Wasn't a drop of gasoline in the hull outfit. The fellers that put the tank in must have left a little hole in it or a crack or somethin', and the stuff all soaked away. I tried to collect from the tank company, but they was busted up in business by that time. Since then I ain't been so accommodatin'."

The motorist looked up almost humbly. "How am I going to get to the next town?" he asked. "Are there any horses around the place?"

Hemenway began to look really interested for the first time.

"Well, I've got the best team in this part of the country," he said. "They make Milford Center in forty-five minutes with the ordinary weight automobile. I charge ten dollars for the trip."

"Bring 'em out," said the tourist, with a sigh of resignation. "You're accommodating, all right, but it's no wonder you don't keep gasoline."

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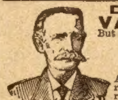

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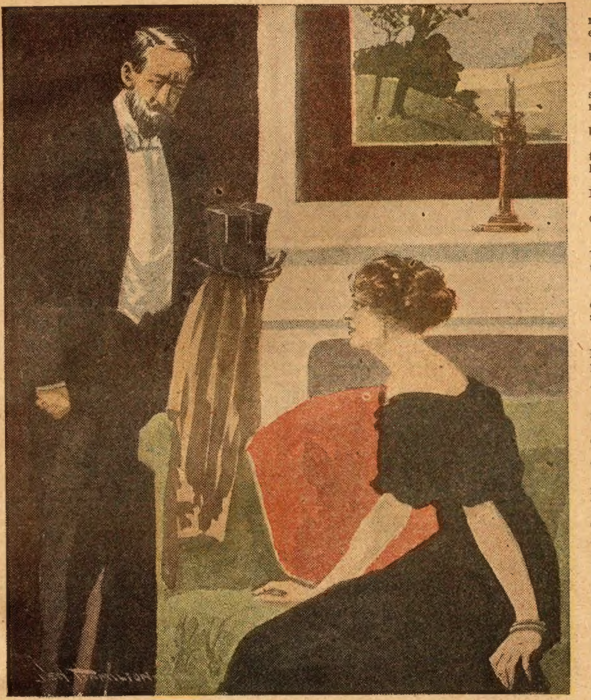
The Diamond Mouse

Or, THE BLACK DOCTOR'S PLOT

By Captain Jack Judson



"Who killed Aunt Constance?" she demanded.

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Begun in No. 38, September 21. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER XIII.

FIGHTING AGAINST FATE.

THE REVEREND HAROLD Basil sat in his modest little study not far from Ravenswood. The light was turned low, but there was sufficient to show a troubled countenance and two white hands all a-tremble. He was a man who had left the old past behind him, and he had believed it buried beneath the weight of years. His life in the community had been without a stain; he had tenderly administered to the cares of his little flock, and in all the countryside there was no better beloved man of God.

But the blow had fallen. Doctor Gurth had opened a door which the pastor had thought closed forever. He had called him by a name which he had discarded when he began the new life. He had told him in words of no uncertain sound that if he did not speak the words which were to unite him to Estelle Randolph, that name should be flaunted before the eyes of the world, and added to it should be a number which he had once borne.

He could have throttled this man of evil. He could have risen from his chair and held him in his grasp till his dark life went out beneath the grip of vengeance. But he had beaten down the desire. The threat had paralyzed him. He would do almost anything to keep back the exposure of his unfortunate past. Why could he not leave the neighborhood and go beyond the Black Doctor's wiles, burying himself somewhere where he would never be found? It was a gripping temptation. But there were his wife and the simple-minded folks of his little parish.

The days were passing. Each one brought him nearer the time when the Man of Graystone would call for his services. He would be commanded to make the beautiful and pure Estelle the bride of this merciless man.

What did Doctor Gurth care for his own past? He could live among the people caring nothing, even if they knew him as one who had broken nearly every law, who had served in the galleys, and who had within him nothing that was good.

The pastor was alone. The wind rattled the old shutters of his study and played hide-and-seek among the vines that festooned the little porch. At one time he had thought of braving this man, of going over to Ravenswood and exposing him to Estelle. She would believe him. She had a right to know the genesis of the Black Doctor, and no one could tell it better than Harold Basil. Why not? What was his life worth when weighed with a young girl's happiness?

At last, a determined expression took possession of his face, he got upon his feet and went to the window. The rain had come, and he could hear it pattering among the leaves. He set his teeth hard and took his hat from the table. It was not far to Ravenswood. He knew the way, for he had gone thither many times, and the night was as day to him in the woods.

He opened the door and stepped out. The mental battle which had raged within him was over. He had won. In a few moments he was hurrying over the ground with his worn face turned toward the manor.

"I can go back to the cell," said he through his teeth, "but I can save Estelle."

Half staggering along, he reached the manor grounds and saw a light in the windows. As he paused at the long porch he passed his hand across his brow to give himself courage, and set foot on the boards. The next second he drew back, for a shadow had passed between him and the light in the red parlor. Doctor Gurth was there!

The minister tiptoed forward and looked into the room. He saw Estelle facing the Black Doctor like a statue carved out of Parian marble. There was no color in her face, and her eyes were filled with a despair that kills.

He wanted to rush forward and confront the man on the very battlefield of his own making. It would end disastrously for himself, and he would have to re-don the prison stripes, but what of that? There had been martyrs before him, a long line of them, and he would only be adding another to the glorious list. Yet he held back. He would wait till Doctor Gurth was gone, and then he would uncover this man's past, even if it forever darkened his own future.

"You will be ready by Wednesday night," he heard the Black Doctor say. "I have everything in readiness. The parson has been engaged, there need be no witnesses. Without this alliance the curse of the Diamond Mouse will remain with you. It will bring doom to you as it brought it to Lady Constance."

The white-faced man on the porch saw Estelle clench her little hands.

"Who killed Aunt Constance?" she demanded, as she looked the Doctor in the eye.

"We may solve that mystery by and by," was the cool reply.

"But I must know."

"You can wait. I am not solving such mysteries now. When you are my wife we can work together."

Estelle reselased a long pent-up breath.

"Remember I shall call the murderer to account!" she exclaimed. "I shall hound him to the gallows!"

A sinister smile took possession of the Black Doctor's countenance.

"It is settled, then," said he. "The ceremony will take place in this parlor."

"Here?" said Estelle with a shudder.

"Here! You need not leave the house. You can remain here and I will return to Graystone."

She threw out her hands impulsively.

"Is there no way out of this?" she exclaimed, all her misery pouring from her soul like a rush of mighty waters.

"No way but by the altar!"

"I care not for the curse of the Mouse," she went on. "I can throw superstition to the winds."

"But there is the command of the dead. You say you loved Lady Constance."

With all my soul. She was good to me."

"Then disobey and let the curse of the dead rest upon your head!"

Sylvan's love recoiled and cast her eyes to the floor.

"Remember! I shall call at eight Wednesday night. I will bring the minister with me."

She did not ask the name of the pastor. There was but one in the neighborhood, and the thought that he was the person referred to by the Black Doctor sent a pang through Harold Basil's heart. He had put a foot forward when the door opened, and he shrank among the vines. In another instant the Man of Graystone was on the porch, and his hand could have touched him. He saw Doctor Gurth step from the porch, and when he again looked into the room it was empty.

"I will go back to prison!" pealed from Harold Basil's throat as he bounded forward. "I will not seal this unheard-of villainy by utterance of mine. Better a life in bonds than the blighting of that young girl's happiness."

The figure of the Black Doctor was still discernible in the light which shifted from the manor house. He was going back to Graystone flushed with triumph. The minister went down the path like a bounding panther. He cared not if his footsteps fell upon the ears of the man ahead. He was within reach of Doctor Gurth when that worthy paused and turned on his heel. They were face to face.

"You?" cried the Black Doctor, as his face lit up with sudden astonishment. "In the name of Heaven, what do you here?"

The minister was facing him with his hands tightened as never before.

"Here I am!" he cried. "I am not Harold Basil, but Convict 999! Take me back. Give me the old cell and the accursed task from which I escaped years ago. Send me to the tread mill of infamy. Clothe me in the stripes I once wore and let me rot among the vilest of earth!"

Doctor Gurth laughed. "You're mad, man," he said. "Go back to your study and reflect. You have lost your head."

"Better that than the losing of my soul and the blighting of a pure life!"

"No," was the response. "I shall not take you at your word tonight. I will call for you next Wednesday night, and you will follow my every word. You will make the heiress of Ravenswood my wife, or——"

"I dare not! I am Convict 999 from now to the end of my life. I will make endless penance for the crime I committed in the heat of passion, but I cannot darken the joy of the young girl back yonder."

"Poor fool!" cried the Black Doctor. "You'll come to your senses before morning. Good night!"

Harold Basil found himself alone in the leaf-strewn path. The rain cut his face, but he heeded not. He raised his hands to Heaven and groaned from the depths of his tortured soul.

"There is one way out of it," came from his throat. "Yes, there is one way and I can take that!"

The following second the path was deserted. The shepherd of the little flock was gone.

CHAPTER XIV.

HALCO IN THE TOILS.

It was well perhaps for Estelle that she knew nothing of the meeting of Doctor Gurth and the country parson so near her home. With the departure of the Man of Graystone she hurried from the red parlor, and, throwing herself upon her couch in one of the upper rooms, gave vent to her feelings. But one message had come from Sylvan since his going away, and that had given her

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little hope. He had written cheerfully enough, but she could read between the lines, and the result was not in accordance with her wishes.

Of Sylvan's narrow escape from death in Richmond she knew nothing. She had not heard of the long hours of unconsciousness when he hovered between life and death, whilst Doctor Dorsey fought off the subtle action of the tropical poison which had been sent into his veins through the puncture of his hand.

When informed of the nature of the stroke Sylvan could think of but one man who could have dealt it. Had the Black Doctor been in the city? He had but a vague recollection of the man who jostled him on the pave the night of his visit to the house of Iris Scotlan. He had vanished like the creature of a dream, but, according to Doctor Dorsey who reached him (Sylvan) in the nick of time, the would-be assassin had nearly done his work. Estelle's lover had lost Halco, and the dwarf had barely escaped with his life at the hands of Dragon, Doctor Gurth's servitor.

Sylvan got out as soon as possible. If he could but establish the Black Doctor's presence in the city another mystery would be solved.

Strange to say, the night of his recovery from the attempt on his life he came face to face with Dragon. The man saw him not and Sylvan fell to watching him with a thousand lightning thoughts in his brain. Of one thing he was certain, Dragon had not wielded the instrument which sent the Guianian death toward his heart. Another hand had done this, and whose but the Black Doctor's?

Dragon was covertly watching an upper window of a small house near the river. He was not there without a mission of some kind, and whilst Sylvan regarded him he remained at his post with the patience of a bravo.

All at once he saw the curtains of the window drawn aside, and a face appeared there. It was Halco's. There was no face like that in all the world. Dragon had run the dwarf to cover, and was now waiting for the little man to leave his retreat. The coast seemed to look clear to Halco.

By and by the curtains fell together once more, and presently the lower door was slowly opened. The imp of darkness looked out and swept the vicinity with his keen, suspicious glances. In another minute he stepped into the clear and made off. Dragon, like the watching wolf he was, threw himself upon the trail. Sylvan did the same.

If Halco had thought he had a man at his heels he might have changed his tactics, but he ran on and on, nor paused till he dodged into an alley-like way where he found a modest eating-house. The fox had come out to eat. Dragon selected a place of vantage and fell to watching the open door through which he could see his prey.

Sylvan now suspected that Dragon had not come to the city for any good concerning Halco. His movements indicated this. Halco held a secret which Sylvan wanted, and he would have to baffle the Black Doctor's man if he hoped to get it. He stole through a narrow opening between two houses and reached the rear of the restaurant. From a window there he saw Halco's back. The dwarf was oblivious to everything but the viands on his pewter plate.

"He shan't escape me as he did in the park," thought Sylvan. "I will hold the brown eel this time," and he eyed Halco, amused by his manner of disposing of his meal which resembled the actions of a wild animal.

At last, as Halco arose from his feast, Sylvan tapped on the pane. The dwarf turned as if a serpent had hissed behind his back. He was about to fly when Sylvan jerked up the sash and spoke his name.

"Dragon is watching you," he said, in low but penetrating tones. "Would you not sooner fall into my hands?"

Halco's face went white. He thought of the bottle and the dagger, his wild plunge from the room to the street below, and with his blood curdled by the recollection he came forward.

There was a door beside the window and he nervously pulled it open.

"Where is Dragon, the killer?" he cried, in breathless voice.

"He is on the street yonder," replied Sylvan.

Halco shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm sure I don't want your life," Sylvan hastened to say. "Come, this way, Halco.."

The dwarf followed at his heels. Sylvan led the way through the alley and did not pause till they were several blocks from the scene.

"Why does Dragon hunt you?" he asked, turning suddenly upon the dwarf.

"Because the Black Doctor sends him."

This was a revelation to Sylvan, and yet he might have thought that Dragon would not hunt the dwarf of his own initiative. A light began to break in upon that which was dark.

He thought of taking Halco to his own lodgings, but, as they were on the other side of the city, he feared that Dragon might strike the trail and bring all his plans to naught. Therefore, Mrs. Scotlan's house being nearer, he conducted his capture to it and mounted the steps. Halco suddenly uttered a cry.

"Not this house!" said he.

"Why not?" demanded Sylvan, as his grip fastened on the dwarf's shoulder.

"She lives here."

"And who is 'she'?"

"The master's wife!"

Halco's startling words went through Sylvan like the lightning's current.

"So much the better," he said. "Then you will be safe here."

The door had opened in response to his ring, and he dragged the trembling dwarf across the threshold. Mrs. Scotlan uttered a cry of astonishment.

"Show me to a room," commanded Estelle's lover, paying no attention to her surprise.

"But the imp of perdition? Where did you run across him?"

"Never mind. The room, madam."

When the door of the little apartment alongside the hall had closed upon them, Sylvan crunched Halco into a chair and stood over him. The imp was trembling still at thought of Dragon, the man with bottle and blade.

"We'll not stand upon preliminaries," he said, looking down into the upturned face. "I am here for a single purpose. Who killed Lady Constance?"

Once more Halco shrugged his broad shoulders and fidgeted in the chair.

"How should Halco know?" he fenced.

"You know many things. You were present when Lady Constance's will was signed, or in the neighborhood. You have served two employers, Lady Constance and Doctor Gurth. Dragon would not be watching you if you had not betrayed the Man of Graystone. You would not be here if you had no guilty knowledge of Lady Constance's murder. The door yonder is locked. You shall not leave this room till you have spoken the truth."

Halco listened to the end, but his face did not change color.

"Now, proceed," cried Sylvan. "If you tell all, you shall go scot free. If you lie, I will turn you over to the tender mercies of Dragon, the implacable."

The dark eyes set in the depths of the dwarf's head looked Sylvan over from head to foot.

"You saw Lady Constance after death?" came slowly over his lips.

"Yes, I saw her in the little room."

"What more did you see?"

"Finger marks at her throat."

"Whose?"

"That is for you to say, wretch!" cried Sylvan, irritated by the imp's coolness.

"And what if Halco should not say?" His face was a malicious grin.

"Then to Dragon you go!" thundered Sylvan.

The deformed creature got upon his feet and pushed out his ape-like arms. The orbs in his head appeared to flash as he suddenly projected his body forward. Before Sylvan could resist or receive the attack he came at him like a wild beast. Sylvan went across the room and landed against the wall. Halco had the strength of a gorilla.

Sylvan uttered a cry, the door flew open, and Mrs. Scotlan appeared. Halco dropped his almost unconscious victim and leaped toward the hall.

"Master and man! No difference!" exclaimed the woman.

She deftly avoided the huge hands thrust forward to seize her, and as Halco reached the door she caught up the lamp on the table and hurled it at his head. The dwarf with a wild cry went down in a heap.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FRINGE OF OBLIVION.

There was never a more disappointed man than Dragon when he discovered that Halco had eluded him at the restaurant. For a moment he raved inwardly like a wild beast. For the second time the dwarf had slipped through his fingers.

He dared not go back to his master at Graystone without a good report, and yet where could he now look for his prey? Halco's trail was lost. Dragon sought to recover it, but without success. He had not caught sight of Sylvan, and therefore did not know that he had got Halco out of his clutches. He went back growling out his displeasure and snapping his iron jaws viciously.

After all, he thought, why not go back to Doctor Gurth and deliberately lie to his face? The idea struck him with impelling force. That he could lie with the coolness of an adept in falsehood he well knew. There was not an honest drop of blood in his veins. Yet that night he turned his face toward Graystone. Halco would never return to give him away, and with this thought he treasured up his duplicity and laughed at his acumen.

It was the next day when he presented himself before the Black Doctor, whom he found in his library taking his ease with the success of his plotting assured. He told the specious story which he had made up with all the deliberation of an expert in chicanery.

Doctor Gurth listened with a smile on his lips.

"You've done well," was his comment. "He wasn't hard to silence?"

"Only a little troublesome," answered Dragon.

"And no one suspects?"

"How can they, master?"

"Which did he choose, the bottle or the blade."

"Since he didn't care to mar his figure, he took the bottle."

"Good! Halco was always a discerning man."

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secure in his strength, was he proof against this little imp of darkness?

"I have other work for you," resumed the Black Doctor. "Vashti still inhabits the cage. I don't think she has left it during your absence, but it is not about her I would talk. You know the minister over the hill?"

"The Reverend Harold Basil?"

"The same," nodded Doctor Gurth. "I shall need his services on Wednesday night."

"Yes, master."

"He may attempt to elude those services," continued the Man of Graystone. "You will see that he does not do so."

"What if he makes the attempt?"

"You will see that he fails."

"By force, master?"

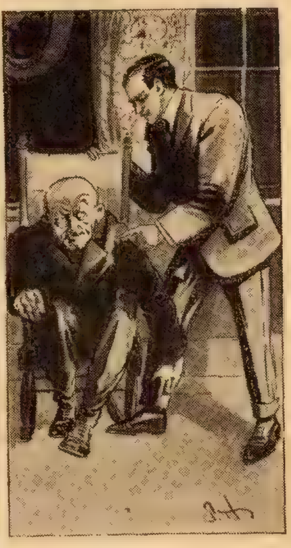
"By force, but without violence."

Dragon bowed. When he went from Doctor Gurth's presence it was with a smile on his face, for his lie had won. He crossed the space which lay between Graystone and the minister's house.

"Trust Dragon when it comes to playing the game," he chuckled. "He came into the world with a head full of cunning. Doctor Gurth can't stand before him as a master of plots. It's a cool game, all for the pretty girl and the manor. And I am to watch the minister, to see that he doesn't make himself scarce between now and Wednesday night. Ho, ho! I see through the whole play, Doctor Gurth."

Dragon had roamed the region for years. He knew every twist and turn of the countless paths, the very trees were as familiar to him as those of his boyhood. Besides this, he could keep a trail with the cunning of a head-hunter, and no better man for Doctor Gurth's purpose could have been found.

A light burned in the lower room of the minister's house. About the place fell a silence which was unbroken. Not a stir quivered the boughs of the trees, and the night-owl had ceased his discordant cry.



"If you tell all, you go free!"

Stealing forward, Dragon edged up to the fringe of the little porch of the house and looked into the room. It was lighted by an old-fashioned lamp which threw its light upon the haggard face of a man who sat at a table, the sole occupant of the apartment.

Dragon laughed to himself. Why had he been set to watch this poor minister? Flight seemed as far as the antipodes from Harold Basil. He had his little flock to look after. He would not abandon it for all the roaring world. There was an innocence and piety about the minister which would have deceived the most suspecting. Dragon did not know of his past, he had never heard that, years before, Harold Basil, in a moment of excitement, had taken a human life and had worn stripes for his act. He had always looked upon ministers as people incapable of doing wrong, and he recalled that once when he was sick Harold Basil had ministered to his comfort.

All at once he saw the minister rise from his chair and cross the room. He opened a plain cabinet and took from its depths a pistol which he carried back to the table. Then he drew writing materials toward him and began to write. It was a strange proceeding to the man outside.

For half an hour Harold Basil wrote with deliberation. His face grew strangely white. Dragon thought he saw the hand tremble, but it might be imagination. At last the country minister stopped and folded the paper before him. Then thrust it into an envelope which he addressed. After this he picked up the weapon and looked at it with compressed lips. He cocked it and laid it down again.

Dragon saw him pace the room with bowed head and his hands clasped behind his back. What did all this mean?

Harold Basil suddenly came toward the door which he opened, and in another moment he was standing on the porch. Doctor Gurth's man drew back and held his breath. He saw the minister lift his hands, and heard strange and incoherent words issue from his throat. Harold Basil turned back into the house and took up the pistol again.

"Gods!" cried Dragon, "the man is going to kill himself!"

Not until now had the minister's intention sifted through the watcher's brain.

He sprang upon the porch and cast a final glance into the room. At once the weapon was placed against the man's temple. Something like an outbreak of horror leaped from Dragon's throat.

He seized the doorknob, and, throwing it open, sprang into the room like a wild beast. A bound carried him to the minister's side. His hand shot out and clutched the would-be suicide's wrist. His was a grip of steel. Harold Basil uttered a cry and recoiled with his eyes fixed upon the intruder.

"What would you man?" exclaimed Dragon, as by a desperate wrench he sent the weapon to the carpet. "Why should you do this, you man of God?"

There was no reply.

"You were good to me once, and now I'll do you a favor," Doctor's Gurth's man continued. "Sit down. You're getting over it." He crushed the minister into a chair. "Bad as I am, I would never think of hurrying myself to judgment."

Harold Basil's face got a little color. Dragon's gaze fell upon the letter on the table and saw that it was addressed to Estelle. Why should Harold Basil write to her? It was beyond his comprehension.

"Let me have the pistol," pleaded the minister. "If only you could understand."

"No!" said Dragon, determinedly, and he kicked the weapon across the room.

The man in the chair took a long breath. "Why did you come?" he asked.

"To save your life."

"Who sent you hither?"

For once Dragon did not lie.

"I came from Doctor Gurth," said he.

"Who would make sure of the poor wretch whose honor he holds in his hands?"

"I do not share all his secrets. There are some he keeps from me."

"Do you know what I have been?"

Dragon shook his head.

"Your master knows," went on the minister. "If I obey him, I shall be accursed of God. If I refuse, I shall go back to the treadmill of infamy from whence I came. Go back to your master."

"But you?"

"Go back, I say! Tell him that, come what may, I disobey. Tomorrow I shall rap at the prison gates and beg of them to let me in. This letter shall not be sent. He seized the packet on the table and tore it into a thousand pieces. "Better a living hell for me than for Estelle Randolph!"

Light broke suddenly into Dragon's dazed mind. He saw the Black Doctor's hand in it all.

"You shall not go back, Mr. Basil!" he cried. "Dragon is your friend!"

CHAPTER XVI.

MISSING.

After the departure from Ravenswood of the White Woman on the night when she had restored the Diamond Mouse, Estelle stood for a while like a person in a dream. The Mouse which she had seized from the table seemed to burn her hand. Had it come back to throw about her that doom which had ever succeeded its disappearance? If Vashti, the White Woman, believed that the Curse of Culloden was all potent for evil, why had she brought it to Ravenswood that it might work further iniquity?

Selina had entered the room and had paused to gaze at her mistress with her great dark eyes full of sympathy. When Estelle caught sight of the octoroon her hand almost dropped the thing.

"Look!" she exclaimed, suddenly, holding the Mouse up to Selina's gaze. "It has come back!"

The girl came forward tremblingly. "It is a strange thing," she said, in low tones. "What will you do with it?"

Estelle shook her head doubtingly. "It has been the death of every one who possessed it," said she. "From the days when it spoke the doom of the Young Pretender until now it has been a thing accursed!"

Selina was rapt in silence.

"I will see that it curses no one," continued Estelle, suddenly gaining strength. "It shall disappear this night from human eyes."

She passed to her room, and the octoroom stood amazed at her mistress strange coolness

Estelle had heard Doctor Gurth's ultimatum. If she could only hear from Sylvan light might break in upon dark places, but where was he? Had he surrendered all hope and betaken himself to some far spot where he could bury himself from all thoughts of the present?

During the hours that followed, Estelle seemed another creature. She

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seemed to have shaken off her old self and Selina noticed that she took walks alone through the shrubbery about the place, wandering now and then to the river which flowed out to the distant sea, as though hoping that the tides would bring to her the hope which was fluttering like a bird on the wing. But the hours were bringing hope to her soul, though she knew it not.

On the fated Wednesday night which the Black Doctor had set apart for the consummation of his plot, a young man was riding up country toward Ravenswood. He knew the way. Guiding his horse along the narrow roads, he gave him free rein and communed with himself. Sylvan was coming back.

As he came in sight of Graystone, looming between him and the stars, he glanced at the singular pile of masonry and frowned. Doctor Gurth was there. Not only this individual, but the White Woman as well. He drew rein and studied the Doctor's castle. He yearned once more to pass the forbidden threshold and confront the man of evil. Presently, however, he rode forward again and left Graystone behind him.

As he entered the grove which fronted the manor house of Ravenswood, he started, for no light greeted his eyes. The place was as dark as the entrance to the cave of the satyrs. The hour was yet early, and surely Estelle was not in bed. He heard the soughing of the winds among the trees, and a fox ran across his path, to vanish among the gloom which held out a welcome for him.

He dismounted at the porch, and was about to step upon it when a figure came out of the vines. It was Selina's. Sylvan sprang forward, thinking he had found Estelle, but the next moment he recoiled and stared at the octoroon. Selina returned his gaze, and then leaned heavily against one of the pillars of the veranda.

"You, Master Sylvan?" she managed to gasp

Her voice sank like a leaden plummet into Sylvan's heart.

"Where is your mistress?" he demanded.

The girl threw up her hands in a gesture of despair and uttered a low cry.

"Have I come too late?" exclaimed the young man. "I have played the game and won, but almost at the cost of my life. Where is Miss Estelle, girl?"

He was clutching her arm, and his grip sent a chill through Selina's frame.

"My God! Are you dumb?" Sylvan cried.

"Don't you know?" gasped the terror-stricken girl. "Where have you been? It is her wedding night——"

Sylvan broke her sentence in a voice which almost paralyzed the nearly white-faced octoroon.

"Her wedding night?" he cried. "Estelle's wedding eve? You are mad, girl."

"Would I were dead!" wailed Selina.

Sylvan cast her aside and plunged into the house. She turned with a cry and caught his arm. He threw her off and looked once more into her blanched face.

"It is false! a specious lie!" he thundered. "She promised to wait for me. She——"

"She waited," interrupted Selina, staring at him. "Miss Estelle waited, but the Mouse came back."

"The Mouse?"

"Yes, Master Sylvan."

"Who brought it back?"

"The White Woman."

"A thousand curses on her head!" he cried. "Where is the white witch?"

Selina feebly shook her head.

"And she brought back the Curse of Culloden?" Sylvan did not seem himself now. "You let this creature of evil import get away? You! you, Selina, so devoted to Estelle?"

The poor creature reeled against the wall for support.

"I'll find Estelle," and Sylvan bounded up the stair.

"I'll help you, Master Sylvan," exclaimed Selina, and the next moment she was at his side.

She led him to Estelle's room and threw wide the door. The boudoir was dark.

"A light!" cried the young man.

Selina lit a candle and held it over her head.

"She is not here," groaned Sylvan.

"I could have told you so, Master Sylvan."

"Have you looked everywhere?"

"Everywhere."

"When saw you Estelle last?"

"She was here at five. It must be near the hour now."

"What hour?"

"When they were to come, Doctor Gurth and the minister."

An oath cut the air from Sylvan's lips.

"So the wolf was to come for the lamb tonight?" he flashed. "It is well that I am here to receive him."

He turned from the empty chamber and raced down the broad stair. Clutching the light, he sprang into the red parlor and looked wildly around. It was as tenantless as the pretty chamber upstairs.

"We must find her!" he cried, turning upon the girl at the door. "She can't be far away."

From room to room he went like a man in a maze. He raced from the house to the summer bower near the path which led to the river. Something touched his hand, and he looked into the dark eyes of Nero the bloodhound.

"You?" cried he. "Well, I may have use for you."

He caught the dog's collar and dragged him away. At the door of the summer-house he struck a match and leaned forward.

"Not here!" the trembling Selina heard him say. "Let us try the hound.

Sylvan pushed the dog's cold nozzle toward the ground. There was a sniff and a cry and the great brute bounded through the timber after the manner of his kind. Sylvan plunged after him with his heart in his throat. The trail led toward the river where the mists lay like a heavy cloud.

"Oh!" he heard Selina's voice behind him. "She said the Mouse should never curse her more. Oh, my poor mistress!"

The dog went by leaps and bounds. It was with difficulty that Sylvan could keep his dark bulk in sight. At length he heard the ripple of the river. He saw the mists silvering in the moonlight. The bloodhound was standing at the water's edge waiting for him to come up.

All at once a peal of laughter broke upon his ears. He turned like one who receives an arrow in his side. The man who had laughed was not far away, and as Sylvan bounded in the right direction he hissed in the fury of his passion.

"I'll settle with you first, Doctor Gurth!"

This extremely interesting story will be concluded in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very strange happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once.

⁂

Up-to-Date California.

There are good men out in California, very good men, and shrewd men, too, according to Eli Perkins.

One day a real good young man, who used to teach a Bible class out in San Francisco, boarded the Union Pacific train at Ogden. He was going home to Boston as a delegate from California to the Massachusetts Sunday School Association. He was neatly and sweetly dressed, and spent most of his time reading the Christian at Work. After a while he got introduced to a colonel, a professor, and a doctor, who said they also lived in Boston, and they invited him to take a quiet game of euchre.

During an animated religious conversation, three aces were thrown on his side of the table, after which one of the Bostonians gayly remarked, with the greatest coolness, "I wish that we were playing poker. I don't know that I have been favored with such a hand for years." Our religious young man from San Francisco immediately saw the game of the sharpers, looked up innocently, and remarked:

"I have been favored also. I have a pretty good poker hand myself."

The three looked at each other significantly.

"They call you Professor?" asked the young man from San Francisco.

"Yes."

"And they call you Colonel?"

"Yes."

"You are from the East, I believe?"

"Yes, from Boston."

"Well, gentlemen," he continued, rising, "you had better take the next train back. We meet it just the other side of the Grand Canon. You can't make a cent at this. They have been teaching it in the Sunday schools in California for years."—Life.

⁂

What Was Said.

In a court a man was on trial who could speak nothing but Gaelic, and an interpreter was called and duly sworn. The prisoner at once asked him some question and he replied. The judge interposed, demanding sharply: "What does the prisoner say?" "Nothing, my lord!" answered the interpreter. "How dare you say that when we all heard him? What was it?" "My lord," said the interpreter, beginning to tremble, "it had nothing to do with the case." "If you don't answer I'll commit you! What did he say?" "Well, my lord, you'll excuse me, but he said: 'What's that old woman with the red bed-curtain around her sitting up there?'" The court roared. "And what did you say?" asked the judge, looking a little uncomfortable. "I said, 'Whisht, ye spalpeen, that's the ould boy that's going to hang yez.'"

⁂

Willie Explains.

Little Bill skipped off to school the other day before his mother had a chance to wash his face. The teacher sent him to the basement to scrub up, but the janitor had failed to leave a towel within reach. Bill went up to the schoolroom, however, with the lower part of his face reasonably clean; the upper part streaked and grimy.

"Why, Willie," the teacher said, "how does it happen that the lower part of your face is nice and clean, while the rest of it is so dirty?"

"Well," said Bill, "they wasn't no towel there, an' that's as high as my shirt would reach."

⁂

Not Since the Flood.

When the Armenian massacres were commanding the interest and sympathy of the civilized world a newspaper correspondent rushed excitedly one day into the office of Assistant Secretary of State A. A. Adee with the question: "Mr. Secretary, will you tell me definitely whether or not the United States Government will send any battleships to Armenia?"

"No ships will be sent there," replied Adee, with great gravity. "Navigation, I am informed, has not been good in the vicinity of Ararat since the time of Noah's ark."

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THE VOLCANO PRISONERS

Or, THE SEA COAST QUEEN :=: By WILLIAM H. MANNING

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Begun in No. 39, September 2[illegible]. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER IX.

FIGHTING THE VOLCANO.

SURELY, steadily we moved into the great gap, and as we passed the point where the upper part of the mountain hung like a roof above us there fell a darkness that added to our dismay. Horror attended the adventure and escape was impossible. The deck, while it lasted, was safer than the current, for no man could live in its embrace. What I feared most was a possible underground gulf waiting to destroy us.

Steve was muttering about boiling lava, brimstone and witchcraft, but he stopped as the brig brought up with a shock and so suddenly that we nearly fell. There was a rending sound and something crashed down on the deck, but we hung without further advance. This gave me a theory.

"Where's the deck-lantern?" I demanded.

We hunted and presently had it. When I had made a light it was no more than a firefly-like glow in the great darkness around, but it confirmed my suspicion. Our main-topmast lay broken and splintered alongside the partners. We had been checked, not by witchcraft, but because our upper rigging had encountered solid rock. A part of our woodwork had carried away, but what remained held us fast in spite of the current. All this we knew, though our light did not send far enough upward to show either rock or fracture.

I held the lantern over the bulwarks at various places and found we were strangely situated. On all sides the current was moving swiftly—too swiftly for a swimmer—and that was all we could see. No spot of land and none of rock met our view. We were prisoners in that rushing river.

"Nobody ever fitly appreciates day and open air until he loses them forever!" said Steve gloomily.

"Forever! Nonsense, mate! We'll get out of this."

"How?" he asked, bluntly.

It was a poser. A boat would fare hard in such troubled waters, but we had no boat. We should have been poor sailors not to be able to make a raft from water-casks, spars, boards and the like, but it would be an unwieldy craft and we felt that we could not hope to govern it there.

While we were debating, and, I confess, feeling helpless, we had a surprise. A step sounded close at hand, and, turning, we saw Captain Knapp at the head of the companionway. We had given him little thought since we left him in the bunk, and none since our coming to the abyss. There he now was, however, and, though pale of face, he stood surprisingly firm on his legs and was looking about him coherently. From viewing the unfamiliar vessel he turned to us.

"Men," he asked, steadily, "what's this? We are not aboard the Happy Ann."

"No, sir," I returned. "This is an abandoned brig."

"Is it the Sunshine?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"What means this strange darkness? What means—but tell me all!"

We told him. Omitting details we gave the story rapidly, trying to make our present predicament clear. Like ourselves, he took the lantern, walked about and peered into the blackness of the abyss.

"I wish," he said, musingly, "we knew how high the roof is off our bows. We can cut our masts away wholly, letting the brig go free, but that might take us into worse straits. Do you know whether the sides of this current fetch to a strip of land or to solid rock?"

"We don't know, sir, but think it is solid rock."

"Bad! If there was a bit of land, or if the rock was broken so as to afford a passage for us, we might get to it by means of a raft attached to a rope. If small, one man with a suitable blade for paddling could cross the water at an angle if he had shipmates here to help him by steadying with the rope, thus holding the raft in check."

"I'll go, sir!" exclaimed Steve.

"So will I," was my addition.

"Wait a bit!"

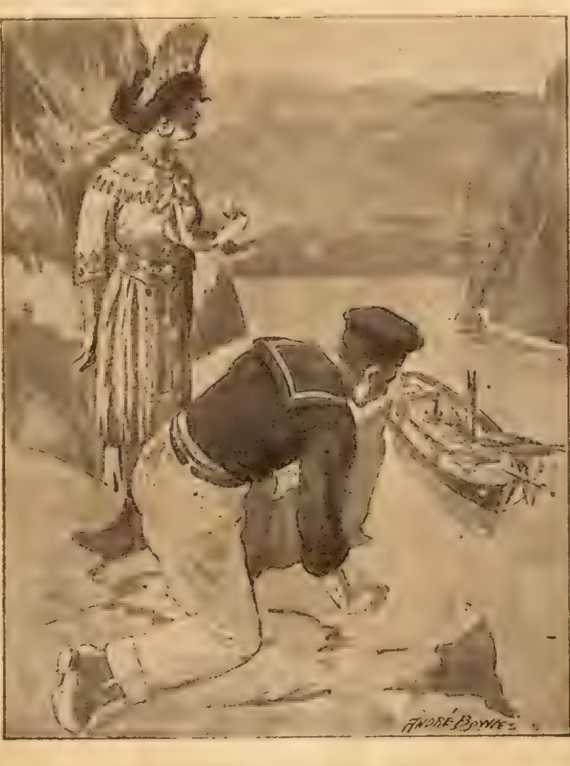
The skipper continued to walk about and use the lantern. I was surprised to see how strong he was after his adventure. His physical powers seemed unimpaired, and his mind was surely alert. Always modest and kindly, he had, nevertheless, ever appeared to me to be a masterful man. He had that manner now as he walked about, and his lips were compressed between his mustache and bearded chin as if he was firmly bent on a purpose.

"It is baffling that this light will not send forth beyond the empty darkness," he finally said, pausing. "Will one of you go aloft and learn what's the look there? The roof stopped us, you say. As far as I can now see, the main point is to learn the course of that roof farther on. Note whether it dips sharply, or whether the cutting away of a few more feet of mast would let us loose again."

At his call for a volunteer both Steve and I had started forward eagerly, but Radd was the nearer and I found myself left. Equipped with the light Steve went up the main-shrouds.

"I hope, sir," I said, "that you do not feel badly stove up by your rough experiences?"

"No, Tom. I've had rough experiences, including captivity in the hands of a native queen, and likewise a lusty blow on the head, but," he added, his voice suddenly growing thick with feeling, "it is all a trifle compared with the desertion of my men. Barker I am not surprised at, but the others—well, I hoped they thought better of duty and decency than that. Abandoned, eh? And the Happy Ann lies high and dry!"



The brig Sunshine lay rocking below.

He took a quick, impatient turn across the deck, but now Steve was heard above.

"Ahoy, the deck!" he called.

"Ay!" the captain returned. "What do you find?"

"Both masts are tolerably firm against the roof, but that roof ain't solid rock by a jugful! It is gashed an' seamed, and there is a sort of passageway big enough for a man to walk in. Seems to me there is a current of air, an' I'm wonderin' if there is a path to the outside world."

The skipper moved quickly, laid hold of the shrouds and was about to go up, but he paused and answered:

"Come down, Steve! The mast may be weakened so we can trust but one man upon it at once. Stay! Can you enter that passage?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Do so, and then I'll ascend."

The light flickered and moved above, after which Radd called and Knapp went up the ratlines. I was left alone on deck, and, being so, I soon detected a new danger. All the time we had lain there the swift water had been beating against our stern, raising a great smother, and it was plain that we were feeling it. The deck had grown more uneasy, acting at the stern like a mettlesome horse trying to rear, and suggesting a loosening of the force that had thus far held her in position. It was due to some cause not then to be ascertained that she had kept her position, instead of swinging about and giving her beam to the current, but a change was surely near.

Either she would swing as indicated, which might cause her to turn turtle, or, as a lesser calamity, the masts would snap above. In any case, if I saved my life, I seemed bound to be separated from my mates and doomed to more of that horrible abysmal journey, and all alone.

My mind grew active and I delayed for no orders. A wild rush took me to the steward's pantry and, helped by the cabin lamp, I slung a supply of food into a bag and ran back to the deck. Another moment and I was hurrying up the ratlines. My movements were none the less brisk because I heard an ominous creaking above, and clearly saw that the brig was turning her larboard beam to the current.

I was half-way up, but, it seemed, still invisible, when Steve hailed excitedly.

"Ahoy, mate! Get up here quick! The masts are bucklin'! Race up an' join us!"

That warning would have been too late but for my own prudence. The upper wood now gave forth a rending sound, instead of a creaking, and I almost burned the ratlines as I trod upon them. The lantern was just above me, and I saw that Steve and the captain were clear of the rigging. My mate was kneeling and holding down his hand. I caught at it, and then the mast snapped under my feet and I was dangling in midair.

There was a moment of terror, but the sturdy sailor lifted me to the rock. Knapp, too, had a hand on my collar, and he now shook my hand in the dim light and then gazed downward.

"Just in time!" he exclaimed. "The brig is gone!"

As far as we were concerned this was strictly true. The breaking of the mast had brought her beam to the water and the skipper had momentarily distinguished a white smother below, and then she gave way wholly and swung down with the current, heeling far to starboard. Another instant and she was gone into the black unknown.

"That's the last of her!" cried Radd. "It will be a miracle if she don't pound to pieces on the rocks before mornin'. She is not only between the devil and the deep sea, but both have got her, and so has Hatharo, the Fiery One. Yes, by my top-timbers! an' so has the Fiery One got us!"

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"Let's see how we stand."

With this reply the captain swung the lantern and peered about us. Sailors' nerves grow steady with experience, and I became cool as soon as I found myself out of my peril, so I also looked.

The rock close at hand was rent and disfigured freely, not in large avenues but into small clefts. A dozen of these were visible, at least half being too narrow for the passage of a human body. Through one of the larger ones came a breath of fresh air that was encouraging, and we began our reconnoisance. We went a hundred feet, and the breeze all the while increasing in volume, and then the cleft narrowed so that even a child could go no farther.

"Blocked!" said the captain, deliberately. "We are close to open air, but we can't get there. We are prisoners, and barred in."

CHAPTER X.

WHAT I FOUND.

Our situation was not so bad as it looked. We retraced our steps, found another passage, followed it two hundred feet and came out into the open air, though on a shelving wall of stone with the sea splashing fifty feet below.

"We shall have a faint moon soon," said the captain, looking at the sky. "We will wait for it and avoid a possible tumble into a pit."

"Don't speak too loud, sir!" I cautioned. "I hear paddles.'

Silence fell none too soon. As we looked the thinning clouds enabled us to see a canoe pass a point of rock. Two men propelled it, but there was a third occupant. It was the island queen. We were unseen, and as the little craft went its way it quickly disappeared. I wondered, very uneasily, what its presence at that point meant.

"I've seen that woman before, men," said the captain. "She is Titicalo, the leader of this gang of cannibals. I've been her prisoner. After I left you to guard the boat Steve, I went with Ben Gustin, Jim Brown, and Luke Hand to investigate the island. We soon decided that we were near dangerous persons and tried to retreat, but were discovered and pursued. My men escaped, but I tripped over a running vine and was captured by the queen's followers.

"Frankly, Titicalo offered me half of her throne, but as I shrank from island matrimony I deferred my answer, though I don't think she was deceived. I finally escaped, was attacked by the natives near the water, and received a bad blow on the head. Finding my senses leaving me, I acted in desperation and tied myself to a log, putting out to sea. I lost consciousness, but it seems I drifted to where you found me."

"Don't you know, sir, where Ben and the other fellers are?" Steve asked.

"No, but we must find them. They are fine men, and we need them, too. I'm sorry that brig has been so hopelessly lost, but we can fall back upon building a raft—I fear there is no other way."

By this time we were picking our course across the mountainside, and as luck favored us we safely reached the refuge and heard the music of Seth Styles' hail at the entrance. He reported that all was well with our volcano refugees.

I slept the rest of the night out soundly, but, bitterly disappointed at the loss of the brig, I was anxious to find the Sunshine's missing boat, so, after breakfast, I took the glass and climbed to the loftiest point of the Fiery One. My hopes were blasted, for I saw nothing of interest expect plenty of natives moving at various points, but something came of my journey.

Being deep in meditation I was descending the mountain without system and by an unfamiliar way when, traversing the clefts and chambers left by old-time volcanic fires I was, as I may say, suddenly transported into another world. I walked into a room furnished as domestic houses are furnished.

I paused, stupefied. It was only the now-familiar type of hardened lava chamber, but chairs, a table, a bed, and other furniture were there, together with blankets, pillows, and other fabrics, and, strangest of all, a full dozen of women's dresses hung on the walls, with a mirror set between them. It was as if I had entered a lady's private room.

Dumfounded for a time, I presently noticed, also, a compass, sundry marline-spikes and belaying-pins, and these cleared my wits. Undoubtedly, I was looking at plunder secured from one or more vessels.

On the heels of these ideas came others that dismayed me. Marline-spikes might be misinterpreted, but not dresses. In a flash I realized that, instead of Hatharo being held in fear by all on the island, at least one person freely visited it, and that the person was the barbarous queen. The room was her private haunt.

Struggling to cast off my panic, I still had the wish to flee without delay. I turned to go, but stopped short. The queen was there, looking at me attentively.

The calamitous meeting found me at a loss what to do. Flight was possible, for the room had two exists, but it occurred to me that the safety of my friends might depend upon my prudence then. I did not run. There was a harrowing pause and then the newcomer spoke.

"I did not expect a caller," she said, coldly.

"I am equally surprised," I replied, lamely. "I did not think anybody——"

"You don't finish. If you enter another person's house do you always think to find it empty? As to that, do you know who I am?"

"No," I answered, disregarding veracity.

"I am Titicalo, despot queen of this island, ruler of three hundred people. You, of course, are one of the castaway sailors. Have you been trying to find me?"

"No," said I, feebly.

"Well, you have found me. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

Perhaps no reply was expected, for, after the briefest of pauses, she unceremoniously added: "Sit down!"

I sat because I saw no way out of it. Still longing to take to my heels, I remembered my friends, and reached out yearningly for hold on the important art of diplomacy. It was hardly an old accomplishment with me. Titicalo sat down opposite me, moving as gracefully as a young animal.

"What's your name?" she pursued, abruptly.

"Thomas Allen," I answered.

"Which vessel were you in?"

"The Happy Ann."

"That is the one aground on the little island. My father was a sea captain, and I know about vessels. Father rescued some of the natives from drowning in a squall, but, before he could get away from these waters, his ship was wrecked and his life was lost. I was on board, a girl of twelve, and, being saved, was very kindly used by the grateful chief of that day. He brought me up to womanhood, and when he felt death drawing near he named me as the ruler to succeed him. I have been queen six years. That's my history. What is yours?"

"I am only a sailor," I returned, "and, just now, a shipwrecked one."

"Where are your mates?"

Having expected the question I was ready, and I hotly replied:

"The scoundrels deserted me! I was sent ashore for fresh water, our breakers being nearly empty, and when I returned to the vessel all hands had gone in the boat. The villains left me marooned."

"So you have been hiding? Have you seen anybody else?"

"Only your people, and they not near. I tell you I am deserted."

Titicalo fell silent, her eyes seeking the rocky floor and her mind clearly intent on something. Then she looked up swiftly.

"How many men," she asked, "are required to manage a brig?"

"That would depend upon her tonnage, her whereabouts, and the course to be laid. Say eight men, though two could handle quite a brig if weather favored—I mean, in an emergency."

"What is a jury-mast?"

"A substitute for a regular mast that has been carried away in a gale or other calamity."

"I thought I remembered rightly. Now, can you fight?"

Her manner grew more imperious, and the glitter of her eyes was anything but womanly. She was really concentrated fury that was usually under control, and I was afraid of her. I managed to reply affirmatively.

"Listen!" she pursued sharply. "A certain native here, one Olliro by name, is inclined to be rebellious and he has influence. I shall kill him and his friends if I can, and, if not, I want to flee the island. Come with me!"

Truly, she was a despot. Without reason to claim my obedience she was ordering me around like a slave. Again remembering that prudence was much better than folly I rose and followed. She paused at the door.

"This," she said, waving her hand, "is my private room, fitted up with things obtained from various wrecks. The natives believe that evil spirits dwell in the heart of Hatharo, the Fiery One, and dare not enter these passages, nor do they know I ever come here. One man, an intelligent priest who is now dead, helped me convey things here. He did not entertain cowardly fear or superstition. Come!"

She started again and I followed. I wondered whether she believed the story I had given of my shipwreck, but saw no sign of disbelief. Anyhow, I was for the time committed to her company.

Showing remarkable familiarity with the way she led through passages that crossed and recrossed bewilderingly, though she trod like one at home. Ten minutes we went forward, and then came out hard by the sea, with a basin an acre in extent at our feet.

"Look!" she directed.

I caught my breath sharply. The brig Sunshine lay rocking below.

"Now," said Titicalo, "you see why I asked about managing a vessel with a small crew. How badly is she injured?"

"Both masts are gone, snapped off like pipestems, and she sets very deep. Still, she could be saved unless her hull is breached."

"Come on board."

We began toiling down a rocky, winding way. I was keen on the errand, for hope had revived that my own party might yet secure the brig and get clear of the island in her. Still, I mistrusted that hull. A canoe was at the water's edge, and we quickly gained the deck.

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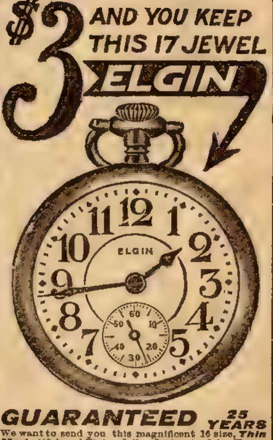

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Why not be your own landlord and employer in a land like this? I have said nothing about fruit because that's too large a subject for this space. I am not selling land. I merely want to send you the booklets the Sante Fe has prepared about this wonderful valley and the possibilities for homeseekers here. We will tell you all about the country—its roads, schools, soil, climate, irrigation works and products. Then if you like we will tell you how to get there and see the land for yourself

The booklets are free, and surely you ought to read them and see if you will be better off in the San Joaquin Valley. Ask any special questions, and if the books do not tell, I'll answer free, too. Address

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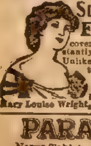

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"Let me explain," the queen said, looking around attentively. "The truth is I am growing afraid of this volcano and apprehend a fresh eruption. If this craft can be made ready, I will take you as captain and sail away from the island forever. Look to her injuries."

I was glad to look, but my zeal was gone. It was not so very much that the masts were snapped off, nor yet that the starboard bulwark was stove in for a distance of six feet along the waist, for these things could be repaired, but something else was different.

"You look troubled," the queen continued. "Why?"

"The brig sets so confounded deep. No cargo would bring her down so much, and that means a punctured hull that could be repaired only by careening."

"Careening? What is that?"

"In plain words, to tip her to one side until her wound was brought above the water-line, so that repairs could be made."

"Then we will—but look out! The rebel Olliro and his men are here, and they want to kill us. Quick!"—she grasped my arm tightly—"dodge that spear!"

CHAPTER XI.

BESIEGED.

I had the quick eye of a sailor, and at the first warning I swept a glance to learn the cause of trouble. Six natives were on the rocks beyond the water, and their spears and war-clubs were as ugly as their faces. I was too late to dodge the spear, but it missed me by a narrow margin and buried itself in the stump of the main-mast.

"Get to cover!" exclaimed Titicalo, coolly, starting for the companion.

"Not that way!" I cautioned. "They will have us penned up there."

Another spear came flying, and it tore through my sleeve. I dropped behind the mast and blazed away with my pistol, wounding a man in the thigh.

The queen had stopped, and she began urging me anew to go below, but I held my position and used my second pistol. One of the islanders fell, and I shouted buoyantly and plunged my hand into a pocket for more ammunition. The result dampened my sudden flow of high spirits. I had only lead enough to load one weapon. This discovery scared me.

"I still think we had better go below," insisted Titicalo, serenely.

"If we do they can burn us in the brig, or starve us out. I won't go there. But, queen, do you go below and look for weapons and ammunition. Look sharp, too, for our lives may depend upon it. Go!"

She took the order composedly and scurried down the companionway.

The cannibals had been briefly quieted by the fall of their comrade, but I saw with regret that he was still living, and when they fell to consulting I wished I knew something about the workings of heathen minds. Our situation was wretched. Beyond the vessel was a dangerous swift rush of waters, and jagged rocks still farther along. He who tried to swim there would go to his death.

The enemy were still chattering among themselves when Titicalo returned. "There is no pistol and no ammunition," she reported.

"Are you sure?" I asked, anxiously.

"I've looked in staterooms, lockers, sea-chests, and everywhere else."

I stood pondering upon this grave news, remembering how helpless I was without weapons, but the queen suddenly spoke in a new vein.

"I am ruler here!" she cried, fiercely, "and others shall know it. Sailor-man, I invite you to be present when I kill two knaves. One is Olliro, the rebel, and the other is a white man. I offered him one-half of my throne, and he dared refuse—to refuse me!" and her eyes blazed.

Here was a shot at Captain Knapp, and I pretended not to hear.

Reduced to extremities, I looked about me to see what crude weapons I could command. Belaying-pins were plentiful, and I found one hand-spike. Then I remembered the spears cast aboard, and, finding that neither was injured, ranged them near for possible use.

Next, true to ruling impulses, finding that the natives continued inactive, I dropped the sounding-rod into the well. When I hauled it up a plain story was told. The graduated scale showed only one inch less than four feet, and that meant that the brig was so full of water as to prove her hull hopelessly breached.

Perhaps adversity cleared my wits otherwise, for I saw what, in the excitement, I had previously missed noticing, and that was that the brig was hemmed in by impassable rocks. No human power could free her, so the basin must be her grave.

I had grown absend-minded, but Titicalo suddenly cried out again, "Olliro and his men are coming!"

I ran to the rail. Five heads were visible in the water, and five man-eaters were swimming to board us. The current was not against them as it was against us, and with good luck they should survive that swim. The situation was serious, but I grasped my weapons and waited for the crisis. A side-glance at Titicalo showed that she had armed herself with an adze and was perfectly calm. I knew she would fight like the tigress she was.

"Queen!" I cried don't let a man reach the deck alive."

"If they do reach it 'twill be past you!" she retorted.

"Now they divide and a part will attack on the other beam. Will you cross and defend the larboard side?"

"To please myself I'll go," she returned, with a toss of her head. "See to it you don't fall asleep at your own post."

It was time for my one shot, and I took careful aim and fired at a dusky head. Almost at the same instant a heavy splash sounded near the swimmers, and other splashes followed to my confusion. I had seen something fall, too, and I sent a glance to the top of the cliff.

Men of my own race were there, hurling heavy stones at the natives.

"Messmates, ahoy!" shouted one of the party, and my heart leaped with joy.

"Ben Gustin!" I called back, gleefully.

"Ay, ay!" he cried. "Sit on the windlass and let us finish them."

The fall of the stones became too much for the man-eaters, and the few who survived turned, dived for safety, and were in inglorious retreat.

Ben Gustin, Jim Brown, and Luke Hand began clambering down the rocks, but Titicalo eyed them with a hard, scowling face.

"Who are those men?" she asked, curtly.

"Shipmates of mine——"

"Oh!" she scoffed, sarcastically. "And so all your mates sailed away and deserted you, did they? You have lied to me!"

Eager, for the sake of my real friends, to retain the queen's good will, I was casting about for an explanation that would convince her, when Ben Gustin swarmed on board and drove the last nail into the dilemma.

"Sail, ho, mate!" he cried, loudly. "Mighty glad to see ye again. Where is Captain Knapp and the rest of the crew?"

"Knapp!" almost whispered Titicalo. "That's the captain who refused half of my throne. Now I know all about you, sailor-man and liar! I know, and I'll leave you for now, but we shall see each other again. Until now I have been merciful, but mercy is dead. I will bury you in its grave!"

She walked quickly to the broken bulwark and lowered herself to the canoe, which, it seems, had all the while been fast to the brig by a line. She was promptly paddling away.

"Eh?" muttered Ben. "What's wrong with her lofty ladyship?"

"There's enough wrong so we must get clear of this brig at once," I replied, "but how will we do it? Swim against that current we can't."

The greetings of our reunion were dampened and forgotten, and as I explained we studied our burden anxiously. Just when we had admitted that there was no way of getting across the strip of water the puzzle was solved for us. The Sunshine had been held by contact with a rock, but she finally fetched clear and drifted exactly where we wanted to go.

Titicalo had disappeared, and as soon as we touched the foot of the cliff we sprang to the rocks and took to our heels. A wild race was made to join our comrades, while Ben narrated recent adventures. He and his two mates had simply been hiding since separated from the skipper.

Fortunately escaping any meeting with the islanders, we finally reached the refuge and were with our friends. The safe return gave relief to Captain Knapp and the rest, while the addition to our numbers was very encouraging. We now numbered nine persons—Mildred, Olive, and seven able seamen. Being fairly well armed, it was a gallant fighting force, though we would be like children if openly opposed to the large party of islanders.

Captain Knapp, somewhat pale from his late adventures, but of good strength and unshaken courage, leaned against the rocky wall of our so-called living-room and spoke thoughtfully.

"Friends," he said, "we have got to get away from this region, but how? I would give my last dollar and mortgage the pay for my next five years if I could see the Happy Ann afloat."

"Ay, ay, sir!" exclaimed Seth Styles, "an' me, too, but that blessed old hooker will never take the water again."

"Unfortunately, that is true. Seth, you are the oldest sailor we have here, and rich in experience. Granted that we can't use a native canoe—we would surely swamp if we put to sea in one—and can't find a boat, what is your suggestion?"

"Tom, mate," the veteran replied, turning to me, "I understand you to say the glass shows no other island anywhere in sight?"

"Not even a sandbar," I replied.

"Bad!" he commented. "Well, sir, to answer you, as we can't fly we must have either a boat or a good, strong raft."

"How are we to build a raft with all them cannibals spyin' around an' seekin' to nab us demanded Steve Radd.

"It is not a question of how we can do it," replied the captain, with energy. "We have simply got to do it. When night falls we will go to the Happy Ann, which will furnish all we need, and before day dawns we must have the raft made and be to the leeward of this island."

"Will not the natives be watching there?" asked Mildred, doubtfully.

"Young lady," the skipper returned, smiling gravely, "I am confident that you

(Continued on page nineteen.)

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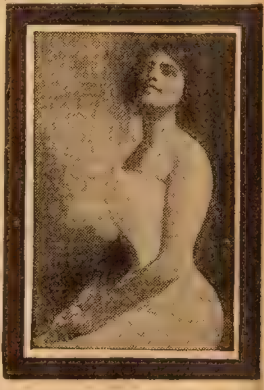

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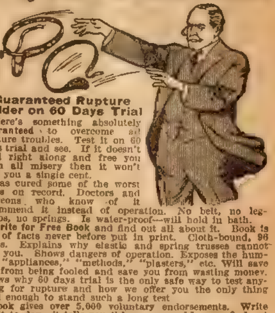

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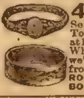

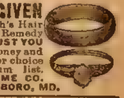

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Needs It Badly.

"Madam, this story will fairly take your breath away

"I don't need it, but you'd better call on my husband and show it to him."

"You think he will purchase? A dollar down, and fifty cents——"

"I am quite sure he will look upon it as a long-felt want. He has tried cloves and coffee and orange peel, and he has yet to find something that will take his breath so far away that he can fool me when he comes in after having had to work late at the office."

An Experienced Horseman.

Minks—"What earthly use have you for six horses?"

Winks—"Guess you don't know much about horses, do you?"

Minks—"No-o."

Winks—"I keep six so that I will always have two that won't have anything the matter with them when I want to drive."

Her Ambition.

Little Marjorie Louise leaned on her grandmamma's knee and gazed into space with a particularly soulful expression.

"Oh, grandmother," she burst out, suddenly, "I just long to grow up and be a big lady and have corns!"

A Smart Woman.

Mrs. Gotham (wife of a clubman)—"Why do you live in such an isolated neighborhood?"

Mrs. Suburb—"I live here because my husband is afraid to leave me alone evenings."

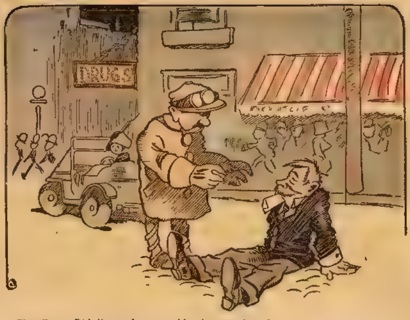
Unhurt.

"Wasn't the fellow who jumped from the window hurt?"

"Oh, no; he struck on his head."

"On his head! But——"

"Well, he had on a soft hat."



Chauffeur—Didn't you hear me blowing my horn?
Victim—Yes, but I thought perhaps you were a candidate for the presidency.

An Independent Boy.

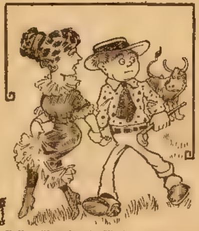
Chief Clerk (to office boy)—"Why on earth don't you laugh when the boss tells a joke?"

Office Boy—"I don't have to; I quit on Saturday."

Knew When to Stop.

Patience—"I played one of my own compositions once."

Patrice—"Well, you were wise not to try it the second time."



Belle—"Gracious! That cow seems to be coming this way awfully fast."

Bill—"Yes, I'm afraid she's lost her calf."

Belle—"Well, do something about it quick to make her see that you are not it."

Wonders of Science.

Photographer—"I have been taking some moving pictures of life on your farm."

Farmer—"Did you catch my laborers in motion?"

Photographer—"I think so."

Farmer—"Ah, well, science is a wonderful thing."

A Special Favor.

Customer—"I want a ton of coal."

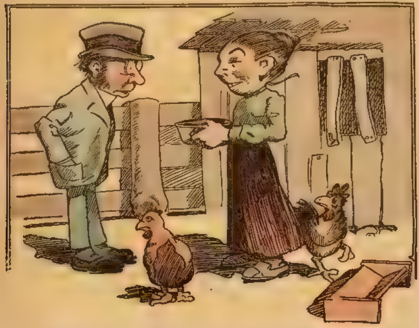
Dealer—"Yes, sir. What size?"

Customer—"Well, if it's not asking too much, I'd like to have a 2,000 pound ton."

A Hint.

Nervous Sportsman—"Your dog seems to be an intelligent animal."

Guide—"He is, sir. Why, only yesterday he bit a lump out of a gent that only tipped me ten cents."



Mrs. Farmer—"Yaas, we go t' bed with th' chickens out here."
Mr. Citiboard—"Great Scott! Don't you find it very awkward and uncomfortable?"

No Assistance Needed.

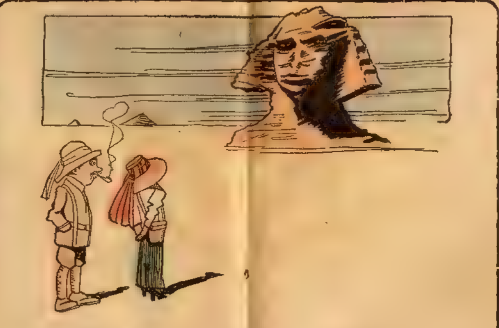
Tired Timmy—"Ma'am, couldn't you help a man out of work?"

Mrs. Pancake—"H'm! You look as if you could keep yourself out of work without help from anybody."

Domestic Peace Assured.

Wife—"And so you got your life insured for my benefit? That's lovely!"

Husband—"Yes, my dear; but just remember, if you drive me to suicide you won't get a cent."



Lady Tourist—"The Sphinx hasn't spoken in 5,000 years."
Her Husband—"Darling, try to be like her just for a day."

Ready to Marry.

Friend—"And so you are to marry George Slimpurse?"

Sweet Girl—"Yes, in a few weeks now It will be a case of love in a cottage, and we've found a little gem of a place out in the country. We shall be so happy."

"I should like to meet him. Can't you have him here to tea some night?"

"Impossible, my dear. The cook has left, and we are obliged to go to a restaurant for meals."

Neither Kept.

"You promised to obey me when we were married."

"You've got nothing on me. You promised to endow me with all your worldly goods."

Has Its Advantages.

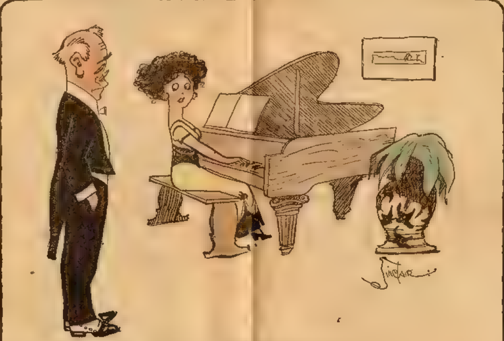
Gibbs—"Wealth does not bring happiness."

Dibbs—"Maybe not, but I'd sooner be unhappy with money than without it."

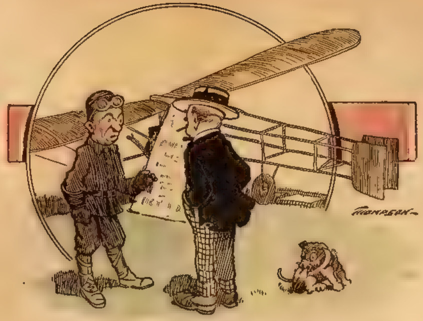
Saving Up.

Mrs. Muchblest—"I feel uneasy. The baby hasn't cried all day."

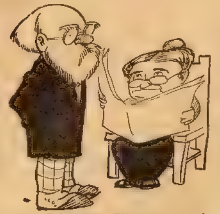
Mr. Muchblest—"So do I. He will probably cry all night."



She—"Are you then satisfied with my singing?"
He—"Oh, it's improving! Today, in fact, I left the cotton out of my ears?"



Aviator—My terms are high—but I may get killed.
Fair Manager—No, you won't. Everything we pull off here is a fizzle.



Mrs. Pokernose—"This paper speaks about the political atmosphere. What is meant by 'political atmosphere'?"

Prof. Pokernose—"It's composed of oxygen, nitrogen, hot air and campaign cigar smoke."

He Can't Say It.

Biggs—"I see that a lot of convicts in a State penitentiary have struck because they don't like the food."

Diggs—"Yes, and it's awfully hard on the warden."

"What is?"

"Why, the fact that he can't say to the kicker: 'If you don't like the food, get out!'"

More Speed.

"What in the world are you doing?" asked the city editor, mopping his brow

"Oh, I've got an assignment to write a column editorial on speed madness," replied the writer

"Well, why the dickens don't you hurry up about it?"

Onto Him.

Miss Gaddie—"He doesn't really care for her."

Miss Wise—"Don't you believe it."

Miss Gaddie—"Well, he told me the very thought of her makes him sick."

Miss Wise—"Yes; love sick."

Artful Dodging.

Billson—"Hello, Jimson! I've caught you at last. I've been trying for three weeks to get hold of you, so as to pay you that ten dollars I owe you, but every time you suddenly disappeared."

Jimson—"Eh? Have you been wanting to see me for that?"

"Of course."

"Great snakes! I thought you wanted to borrow more."

A Queer Woman.

First Prison Missionary—"That Mrs. De Goode is the most eccentric person I ever saw. You remember Mr. Brutie in cell No. 500, under sentence for killing his wife?"

Second Prison Missionary—"Yes, poor fellow."

"Well, I gave her a lot of flowers marked 'Brutie,' and she went off and put them on the woman's grave instead of bringing them to cheer the poor husband."

Maud Didn't Care.

"What did Maud do when she heard that the board had declared the girls must wear simple graduation costumes?"

"She just laughed."

"Laughed?"

"Yes. Maud is the prettiest girl in her class."

For Information.

Stranger—"Can you tell me where I will find your bureau of vital statistics?"

Farmer Brown—"I kin give you the village dressmaker's address. She knows the age of every woman in town."—Life.

A Baby Shut Up.

Mr. Flatdweller—"That baby next door must be dead."

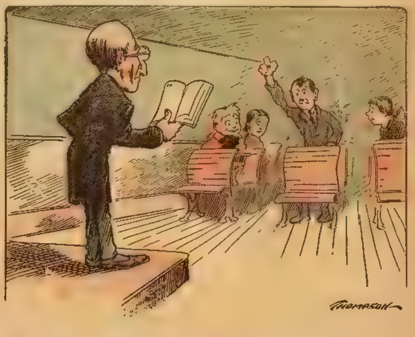
Mrs. Flatdweller—"Gracious! What makes you think so?"

Mr. Flatdweller—"It hasn't cried for nearly half an hour."

Biased.

"What is your opinion of dry farming?"

"I think it's all rot. But, then, I may be prejudiced, my brother owns stock in a brewery."



Schoolmaster—Now, who knows the meaning of contempt?
Boy (holding out his hand)—Please, sir, it's a drink.
Schoolmaster—What do you mean?
Boy—It's what my father says he treats you with.

Big Enterprise.

"Why don't you take a part in politics?"

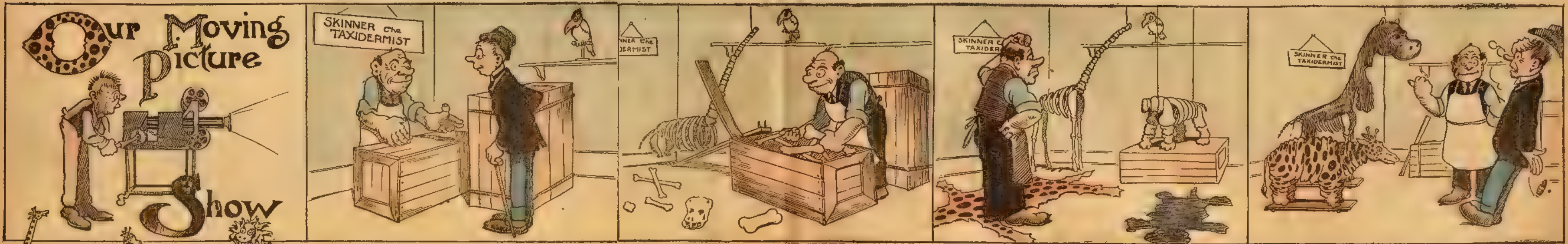
"I never take a part in anything," replied Mr. Dustin Stax. "My rule is all or nothing."

Fountain of Youth.

Lady—"Is that blind woman really so old? Why, she hasn't a wrinkle."

Asylum Attendant—"No mum. She's never been able to see what fine clothes other women has."

SWAPPING THEIR SKINS.



Returned Hunter—"I am very anxious to have these skins and bones correctly assembled."

Taxidermist—"Leave it to me, sir. I am an expert at stuffing."

"These things ain't exactly in my line, but I'll put up a bluff at it anyway.

"Here's where the fine work comes in. If I wasn't an old hand I wouldn't try this."

Taxidermist—"There they are, sir. There was some of this one's skin missing but I got the other together all right."

Hunter—"Heavens! You've got the giraffe's skin on the Hypo!"

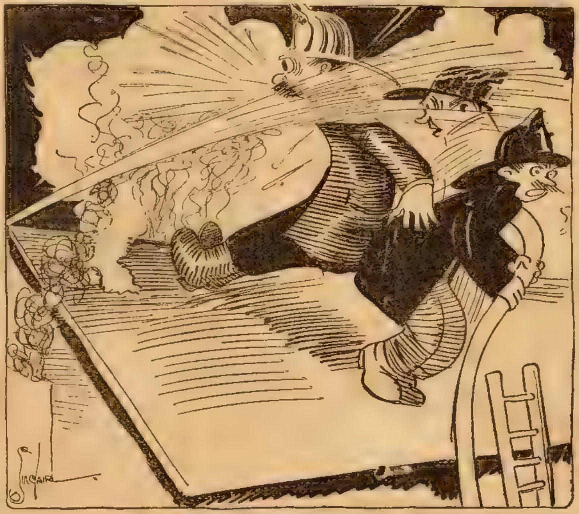
VOLUNTEER FIREMEN

By WALTER A. SINCLAIR

ANY person of the male persuasion who is a sound sleeper is qualified to be a volunteer fireman. The more sound while sleeping, the better. A good, free control of the English language and a strong speaking voice add greatly to the 'toot onsomb', as the French say. These gifts, coupled with the knack of wearing a leather hat weighing ten pounds net and a pair of rubber boots entitles one to climb the social ladder and hack a way into our most exclusive homes, on proper provocation.

Volunteer firemen are always "our gallant laddies." Some have gray chinchillas and some have no foliage on their tops, but the rule was established by somebody long ago, and it goes. Likewise, their reason for existence is "the Devouring Element." "Fire" sounds so cool by comparison. The Devouring Element, even when it only devours thirty-seven cents worth of shingles, has the proper lyric note and should be encouraged.

Every volunteer company has a hundred or so members in good standing and about six who are in good running condition. As a result the good standers always attend the Saturday night smokers and pokers at the hose house, but are lamentably invisible when the Devouring Element gets an edge on its appetite and cuts loose. Then the members who figured so prominently at the annual picnic, or who threw such conspicuous chests at the firemen's tournament, go into trances from which nothing can arouse them until the trusty few who love to eat smoke, being epicures, have wrecked the doomed structure. Oh, yes! Any edifice attacked by the Devouring Element is a doomed structure—at least after the gallant laddies get through with it.



It made excellent scores on Oopdike.

Our town boasts a volunteer outfit—oh, very well, strike out the "boasts." We have one. Gallant laddies all, splendid end-men, interlocutors, and chorus when they give a burnt-cork affair. Burnt, doomed structures are different. They play a dandy ball game and did well in tug-of-war. They went to the State tournament, and the speed team, attired in sleeveless, abbreviated running shirts and panties won a prize. They were barelegged because the hose was all on the hose wagon. Just think what would happen to the gallant laddies if they wore those X Y Z costumes while tackling the Devouring Element is too painful to contemplate.

The only way most of them went to fires was to attend the "smokers" at the hose house Saturday nights, on the theory that where there was smoke there must be some fire. Authority was so generously distributed that every one was entitled to butt in. Several old dodoes holding honorary offices in recognition of voluptuous donations to the treasury, could be found bleating about whenever there was a blaze.

In the active force (and not so blamed active at that) authority was splintered delightfully between two lieutenants, because each faction was strong enough to defeat electing a captain with actual say-so.

The only officer who had no rival for the job was the janitor who looked after the somnolent pair of horses which were growing so fat in idleness that they stuck in their stalls as though in corsets, until the Humane Society made the company enlarge the places. The fat team and the hose wagon made a brave showing whenever the town had a parade. On our Safe and Sane Fourth the apparatus did noble service carrying ice cream freezers to the picnic grounds, one of the best things they ever did.

The two rival lieutenants rode on opposite running boards and glared jealously from beneath their white helmets. Some insurgents had protested that only chiefs wore white helmets, but the two lieutenants defied convention, demanding how any one was going to distinguish a boss at a night fire if he didn't have that style of topper. Any one ever hearing their voices could have answered that one.

Henry Blum, our popular plumber, was lieutenant by virtue of the fact that he had a voice which could be heard in the next county on a clear night. Oswald Oopdike, the enterprising ice man, also was lieutenant, having been chosen because of his really remarkable delivery of profanity.

There always were plenty of gallant laddies at the hose house Saturday nights, when the poker games raged, but the Fire Fiend, which is a nom de plume for the Devouring Element, invariably picked a bleak Tuesday or Friday, in the black hours. Fires resemble babies in this particular—and otherwise.

One disagreeable Tuesday morning, about two o'clock, when no self-respecting fireman would think of being out, or at least would hate to have his wife know it, the dread alarm rang out. Just like that. It gets frightfully technical, writing about fires, because it always is a dread alarm which summons the gallant laddies to battle with the Devouring Element in the doomed structure.

As in divorce suits, after the summons came the complaint.

Mercy, yes! That is, in the case of those who woke up. They complained bitterly that it simply was an outrage to have a fire at that time in the morning, and why didn't the town get milk wagon drivers for volunteers if they were going to have early fires. The most prominent sleepers, of course, didn't pay any attention at all, and others who noted that the signal was not in their neighborhood resumed their snore specialty.

Of those who got up, the married men had to give their wives a convincing argument to prove it was a regular fire and not a frame-up to get out and make a night of it. After being warned to wear their rubbers and flannels, the gallant laddies were allowed to prepare for the fray. That is, some were. Several had to pay fines for not attending, and they dug rather than admit their wives wouldn't let them out at night.

Our tastiest dressers took baths, shaved, and picked out their nattiest shirts. Properly attired they hied themselves to the house of Deluge Hose No. 1, where they found Henry Blum and Oswald Oopdike running amuck, in fact several mucks, trying to light the official lantern, while crowding their portly horses into the size-too-small harness. The confidential tones in which they discussed the ivory composing each other's head, permeated, as it were, the hushed morning air. In the darkness Hen had

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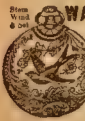

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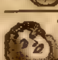

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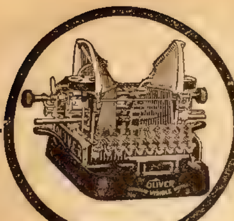

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donned Oswald's leather chapeau and this furnished theme for discourses of a personal nature.

The incipient holocaust which had ravaged the entire porte cochere of Sig Einstein's classy two horse-power dry goods emporium and was gnawing greedily into the ribs of the Elite ice cream garage, was putting up a very select article of lurid glare, so popular at these functions, when Deluge Hose No. 1 rolled down Main street at a dizzy mile-in-fifteen-minutes clip.

"Doc" Fosdick, who has his title because he runs an automobile agency, jumped off at the hydrant and wound the line around it. This action yanked the hose out so spontaneously that it spilled Ed Terwilliger off the back step and all over the foreground. He spent oodles of precious time searching for his hat. "Doc" got the line on the plug and in a moment of ambitious activity turned on the aqua pura at the psychological moment Lieutenant Oswald Oopdike was screwing on the brass nozzle at the other end.

The result was a simultaneous out burst of H_2O and sulphuric profanity, the latter by Oopdike who caught the full force of the argument as it showered him. His performance was never equaled in that bailiwick. Strong men, who arrived too late to hear it, begged with tears in their voices for an encore or a return engagement, and cried like little children when the professor refused to oblige.

While Lieutenant Oswald was taking an adjournment to tell "Doc" Fosdick a number of things he had thought of him extemporaneously on the spur of the watery moment, Lieutenant Hen Blum laid a second line, assisted by the entire troupe of trained spectators.

After affixing the nozzle, before letting "Doc" make the hydrant connection, Hen, with Orville Dumm, our cultured trombonist, took a strategic position on the opposite side of the doomed structure from where Oswald was working and ordered the revels to begin. It might be observed in passing that Einstein's dry goodsery, as a doomed structure, was about the doomedest thing this side of Crack o' Doom.

"Water!" bawled Hen, in his most appalling tone. "Water!" Any man who calls for water in mixed company takes his own chances. His prohibition ukase received prompt attention, and then Hen began to happen all over the place.

It seems that the nozzle had not been used for a year, and the turn-off valve was rusted tight when the water came racing up to that stub end. The pressure made that hose act like a performing eel, the brass nozzle smacking Hen shrewdly on the coco and ricochetting on Orville Dumm. He had been selected to handle the brass because of his superman talent with the slide trombone, but even he found the job beyond him, by several feet, and mercifully was put out of his misery when the nearest length of hose burst with aplomb. Consider the curtain of charity dropped on this untoward tableau which now overwhelmed the distracted populace and moistened their impromptu costumes.

Oswald Oopdike, assisted by a select list of heroes, mounted the windward side and sprayed the roof which had not incinerated. Provoked at the thought of the roof escaping, Oswald and his men chopped lustily and in five minutes had carved through the shingles a hole which made an elegant flue. Immediately thereafter that was a perfectly good roof with a young Vesuvius blistering up through the vent and singeing eyebrows.

The Oopdike faction now sought the most graceful method of retiring from the roof without being walloped by their hose. Their problem was solved for them. The Blum outfit, with repairs made and nozzle opened, let go a juvenile Old Faithful of Yellowstone which missed the fire, but made splendid scores on the roof crew, Oopdike and supporting cast. Not that it supported for any considerable time.

Fortunately the distance to terra firma, i. e., the United States, was slight. After readjusting their political and religious views, the Oopdike branch bored a stream through one side window, making the total loss most gratifying to Einstein, the torrent coming out the front window in such a manner as to distribute the Blum crew over the restricted business section.

No one can tell what the carnage might have been had not the Devouring Element become discouraged at the opposition and retired. While there still remained a sputter, cool volunteers smashed in the front windows and doors of the Elite ice cream garage, after which they drew back to contemplate their hazardous work with pride and awe.

The town breathed a sigh of relief as dawn shone on the wet and blackened ruins—referring to the doomed structures and not to the volunteers. Even now the populace shudders to think what may happen any time the Devouring Element breaks out—if the gallant laddies respond.

* * *

Blobbs—"If you were going in for music, which instrument would you choose?"

Slobbs—"Well, I've always thought I would like to be a soloist on a cash register."

The Volcano Prisoners

(Continued from page fifteen.)

and your sister are of dauntless courage, so I will be frank. We may be left alone, but I can hardly believe it. I expect to construct that raft under fire, so to speak. Well, so be it—while a part of us build the structure, the others shall fight the enemy off."

"I would not discourage you," interposed Olive, slowly, "but is it prudent to risk this fight with the man-eaters?"

"If we saw hope in the next few days, no; but we see none. I can hardly credit that the future will offer fresh hope, so I believe we had better make our attempt now. Delay may bring injury to some of us, and it seems sure that Titicalo will lead her cutthroats to search the mountain for us. If they search they will find us."

"Act at once!" Mildred cried.

"It is surely best so," Olive agreed.

"What say you, men?" asked the captain. "Shall we so act?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" cried the tars in chorus.

My own lips moved while they shouted, but I could not force my voice. I was ready to risk as much as any other man, but I expected a desperate night of it. Titicalo was thoroughly aroused, and she would belie the shrewdness with which I credited her if she permitted us to go aboard the Happy Ann and construct our raft. Worst of all, we must take Mildred and Olive with us, else we could not sail away when our mast was stepped, and we should take them into whatever peril we invited.

It was an ominous outlook, but I sounded no word of caution. And so it was settled that we should that night make our great attempt. We fell to examining our weapons, to be ready for the fight against great odds.

This story, developing very thrilling happenings, will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming months.

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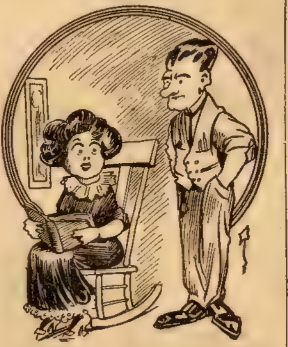

His Wife—"In this book the author says the heroine had a "wealth of golden hair."

Mr. Gingo—"Sure thing! Put all her money into rats and puffs, like the rest of you."

* * *

The Birthday Present.

"Big Tim" Sullivan was being congratulated by a New York reporter on the superb charity of his annual dinner to 7,000 Bowery men.

"Well," said Mr. Sullivan, modestly, "I confess it's at least a charity that pleases it recipients. It's not like the young woman's birthday present to her beau.

"A young woman, having landed a young man at last, thought she'd give him a birthday present. So she went into a cigar store and said:

"'Give me five cents' worth of your very best cigars, please.'"

* * *

Wires Tangled.

Thomas A. Edison was accepting blandly a reporter's apology for an error in a quotation.

"Oh," Mr. Edison said, "I am rather well used to being misquoted. Electrical terms are always confusing to the lay mind. No wonder. Listen to this."

Here Mr. Edison drew a telegram from his pocket.

"I got this telegram from an assistant electrician this morning," he said. "Listen." And he read:

"'Wire with no outside outside. Put inside wire outside and outside inside. Need more outside for inside.'"

* * *

Clever Son.

"When I was a young man I worked twelve hours a day," said the sire.

"I admire your youthful energy," replied the son, "but I admire still more the mature wisdom which led you to stop it."

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—These **"Perfect Vision"** lenses will enable you to shoot the smallest bird off the tallest tree top and to distinguish a horse from a cow at the greatest distance and as far as your eye can reach—

Now you certainly do want a pair of these wonderful **"Perfect Vision"** lenses of mine, and I surely want to give you a pair absolutely free—without ever asking you to pay me one penny for them, now and never.

So just write me your name, address and age next birthday on the below coupon and send it to me at once and I will immediately mail you a four-dollar cash certificate entitling you, absolutely free of charge, to a brand new pair of my wonderful **"Perfect Vision"** lenses, which will again enable you to enjoy your reading, sewing and hunting just as much as you ever did in your younger days.

Write Name, Address and Age Below.

DR. HAUX, The Spectacle Man,
ST. LOUIS, MO.

Please send me your free lens offer to fit my eyes. My age is...........

Name ....

Postoffice ....

R. R........Box........State..........

DEVELOP YOUR BUST
In Ten Days FREE

To make more friends I will *give away*, to each lady using the coupon below, a *full* and *complete* method for bust development—NOT a trial method BUT EVERYTHING that is necessary. You will be under no obligation—no expense—there is nothing to buy—the whole process is *FREE*. This method was never offered before for less than $5.00. I will include my book *"Womanly Beauty,"* showing how

I Developed My Bust

gained a fine figure, clear complexion and good health by a method 20 years in advance of any other. You should act quickly as I shall probably be forced to withdraw this marvelous offer. Do not ask for information—there is nothing more to tell—write your name and address plainly, pin the coupon to it and I will send the WHOLE METHOD in PLAIN WRAPPER, SEALED and PREPAID. Do it now.

Send me FREE a complete treatment for bust development, all charges paid. I enclose 25 cents to help pay advertising and forwarding expenses. If it fails you will return the quarter.

Madam Williams, E-F Sanative Co., Buffalo, N.Y.

14kt. SOLID GOLD-FILLED BRACELET GUARANTEED 5 YEARS 30c

Greatest value ever offered in Ladies' and Misses sizes. Handsomely engraved bracelet, has secret lock and will fit any arm. Buy your jewelry direct from the makers and note your savings. We offer this wonderful value just to introduce our "One Profit Jewelry Catalogue." Send us 30c today for bracelet. Money refunded if not satisfactory. THE GUARANTEED JEWELRY MFG. CO., Dept. O. 1200 Arch St., Phila., Pa.

$50 TO $100 A MONTH!

I LU

Experience not needed Just spare time.

Active man wanted in each locality. 15 to 60 years. To introduce us to friends. Grand world-wide Society. Pays largest cash benefits when sick, injured, and at death, for smallest cost. Helpful, inspiring—**Profitable**. Has made thousands happy and prosperous—why not you! Free-Insurance and Cash-Bonus offer to first applicant from each place. Write at once for full particulars. The I-L-U of the World 775 Covington, Ky.

ANECDOTES OF PEOPLE

Unexampled Courage.

He was the small son of a bishop, and his mother was teaching him the meaning of courage.

"Supposing," she said, "there were twelve boys in one bedroom, and eleven got into bed at once, while the other knelt down to say his prayers, that boy would show true courage."

"Oh!" said the young hopeful, "I know something that would be more courageous than that! Supposing there were twelve bishops in one bedroom, and one got into bed without saying his prayers!"

❧

Better Than Politics.

Friend—"What are you working at now?"

Inventor—"Greatest thing of the age—a dollar-in-the-slot voting and weighing machine; it collects the poll tax, counts the votes, and so beautifully discriminates that there'll be no more trouble, no more politics, no more speeches, no more brass bands, and best of all, no more boodlers."

"My stars! What's the idea?"

"Simple as A B C. The machine only counts the votes of those under a certain weight. Quick as the party in power begin to get fat on the spoils of office, their votes are thrown out, and the half-starved minority walks in; and when the new party gets fat, it goes out, and so on. It beats all creation! Gives every fellow a chance to become a successful politician."

❧

Needed Protection.

Mr. Suburb—"What in the world is that fat, lazy tramp doing around here?"

Mrs. Suburb—"I hired him to stay around and protect me from that horrible big watchdog you brought home last night."

❧

A Sad Sight.

"I saw something sad on that Indian reservation."

"What was it?"

"A boy scout was teaching some little Indian boys how to make traps and trail game."

❧

The Disciplinarian.

There is in our navy a certain rear-admiral, grave, serious-minded, conscientious, who is an excellent disciplinarian. But he has had his failures, too.

In his younger days he was greatly distressed by the carelessness of his charming wife. She had pinned her silk petticoat in the back until there was a great frayed place at the band. She continued to wear the petticoat, however, although her efforts to keep on pinning it at the frayed place always evoked a little storm of irritation and temper.

In vain her husband urged her to mend it. Finally he decided that the only way to reform his wife was to fill her with remorse. So this future commander of battleships with his own hands ripped off the old frayed band and sewed on a new one. Then he took it to his wife. She was greatly moved, thanked him, kissed him, and left the room.

Presently she came back, her arms laden with garments.

"Here are a few more for you, dearest," she said. "But please don't hurry about them. Just fix them whenever you have time."

And she put seven petticoats on the chair beside him.

BOYS

FREE This Daisy Air Rifle. Make 15 10c. sales Gold Eye Needles. When sold return the $1.50 and the nickel plated rifle is yours. Order goods today. U. S. SUPPLY CO. Box 55 Greenville, Pa.

He Did Not Complain.

Globetrotter—"I had an experience last time I was over. The inn where I stopped in one town was full, and I had to take the haunted room or sit up all night."

Host—"Did you take it?"

Globetrotter—"Yes; and if ever a room was really and truly haunted that was. Every time I woke up, I felt what seemed like another person in bed with me, but when I lit the candle nothing was there. It was horrible."

Host—"I should say so. Did you tell the landlord?"

Globetrotter—"No, indeed. He would have charged me for lodging for two."

❧

Caused Her to Think.

Pat was a bashful lover, and Biddy was coy, but not too coy.

"Biddy," Pat began timidly, "did ye iver think of marryin'?"

"Sure, now th' subject has niver intered me thoughts," demurely replied Biddy.

"It's sorry Oi am," said Pat, turning away.

"Wan minute, Pat!" called Biddy, softly. "Ye've set me a-thinkin'."

❧

Kindly Advice.

A colored man was brought before a police judge charged with stealing chickens. He pleaded guilty, and received sentence, when the judge asked how it was he managed to lift those chickens right under the window of the owner's house when there was a dog in the yard.

"Hit wouldn't be of no use, Judge," said the man, "to try to 'splain dis thing to you all. Ef you was to try it you like as not would get yer hide full o' shot an' get no chicken, nuther. Ef you want to engage in any rascality, Judge, yo' better stick to de bench, whar yo' am familiar."

❧

A Man's Nerves.

Mrs. Binks—"Ooo! Doesn't it make you nervous to have the wind blow so this time of night?"

Mr. Binks—"Why?"

"Just hear the windows! They rattle like everything!"

"Um! It would make me nervous to hear the windows rattle if the wind wasn't blowing."

❧

Began to Economize.

She—"As we are to be married next month, don't you think you ought to begin to economize?"

He—"Oh, I've begun already. That very thought occurred to me this evening as I was coming out here."

She—"What did you do?"

He—"Passed the candy store without stopping."

❧

Gave It Up.

A Mr. Brown of England was in the habit on festive occasions of proposing the health of a certain young lady as his favorite toast. After a while he stopped doing this, and when asked why, he replied sadly:

"I've toasted her for six years without being able to make her brown, so I've resolved to toast her no longer."

❧

Anxious to Serve.

Lawyer—"It is reported that you have frequently expressed yourself as opposed to capital punishment?"

Deacon Highsoul (drawn for jury duty)—"I won't have no scruples in that man's case. He cheated me on a hoss trade once."

❧

A Big Boom.

Mr. Gotham—"How's business in your section?"

Western Friend—"Booming, sir; just a-booming. Why, sir, in Dugout City, where I live, they are opening up new streets so fast that the whole town is down with diphtheria."

❧

One or the Other.

The Newly Weds were driving along a very hilly road in northern Missouri.

"Such horrid hills!" she exclaimed. "I think there are entirely too many of them."

"Either that," replied the man, "or there are only half enough."

❧

Thanks for the Suggestion.

"Have you a spare cigar about you, old chap?"

"Certainly! But I thought you were going to stop smoking."

"So I am, but not too abruptly. I've already quit smoking my own cigars."

The Courtesy of Moses.

"There is often something luminous about a child's definition," said a Sunday school teacher in Harrisburg.

"'What can you tell me about Moses?' I once asked of a pupil."

"'He was a gentleman,' was the somewhat startling reply I got from the youngster.

"'A gentleman!' I exclaimed. 'What do you mean by that?'

"'Well, ma'am,' explained my youngster, 'when the daughters of Jethro went to the well to draw water, and when the shepherds came and drove them away, and Moses helped the daughters of Jethro, he said to the shepherds: "Ladies first, please, gentlemen."'"

❧

Came for the Provisions.

Eli Perkins used to relate this anecdote of President Lincoln: One day an old negro, clad in rags and carrying a burden on his head, ambled into the executive mansion and dropped his load on the floor. Stepping toward President Lincoln, he said.

"Am you de President, sah?"

"I am," said Mr. Lincoln.

"If dat am a fac' I'se glad to meet yer. Yer see, I lives away up dar in de back o' Virginia and I'se a poor man, sah. I hear de is some pervisions in de Con'stution for de culled man, and I'm here to get some of 'em, sah."

❧

Served Just as Well.

They were in Italy together.

"If you would let me curse them black and blue," said the groom, "we wouldn't have to wait so long for the trunks."

"But, dearest, please don't. It would distress me so," murmured the bride.

The groom went off, but quickly returned with the porters before him trundling the trunks at a double quick.

"Oh dearest, how did you do it? You didn't— —"

"Not at all. I thought of something that did quite as well! I said 'S-s-s-s-susquehanna, R-r-r-rappahonnock!'"

❧

Her Ruling Passion.

The woman who had chased dust and dirt all her life finally reached St. Peter.

"Come in, you poor, tired woman," he said, and held the gate ajar.

But the woman hesitated.

"Tell me first," she said, "how often you clean house?"

The saint smiled.

"You can't shake off the ruling passion, can you?" he said. "Oh, well, step inside and they'll give you a broom and dustpan instead of a harp."

❧

Forgot Himself.

A justice of the peace, who was also a deacon, was about to perform a marriage ceremony. "Madam," he said, addressing the bride, "do you agree to take Mr. Z—— for your wedded husband?" And after the young lady had replied in the affirmative the justice, turning to the bridegroom, delivered himself as follows: "Prisoner at the bar, what have you to say in your defense?"

❧

Natural Advantage.

"I suppose," said Mr. Meekton, "it would be in a certain sense a saving of time to let the women run the affairs of the country."

"For what reason?"

"When a man discusses politics he wants to stop everything else, but a woman can go right on with any sort of animated conversation and never drop a crochet stitch."

❧

Working Hours.

"No man ought to be asked to work more than eight hours a day," said the reformer.

"Look here," replied Farmer Corntossel, "of course you're entitled to your opinion, but you mustn't come around us farmers in the busy season with a proposition to make every day a half holiday."

❧

Impractical on the Face of It.

"I understand," said Mr. Erastus Pinkley, "dat dey has invented a machine for washin' an' ironin' money."

"Go 'long, man," replied Miss Miami Brown. "You knows des as well as I does dese white folks ain' g'inter leave no clothes lines full o' two-dollar bills hangin' out in de yard."

❧

Told the Whole Story.

Some cowboys caught a fellow and hanged him as was both customary and proper not many years ago. They pinned a placard to his breast:

"He was a very bad man in some respects,
A durned sight worse in others."

❧

In an Epigram.

Mrs. J. G. Phelps Stokes (Rose Pastor) stated epigrammatically at a dinner in New York the value of an education.

"Many poor people," she said, "are spending their second childhood in the almshouse because they spent their first in earning instead of learning."

❧

Men and Women Wanted

For Government Positions. Write to Franklin Institute, Dept. G 79, Rochester, N. Y., for free list of Government positions open.

FINEST RUGBY FOOTBALL GIVEN

WE GIVE A SPLENDID RUGBY FOOTBALL TO BOYS WHO FREE sell our New Gold Eye Needles at only 5 cents a paper. **Easy to Sell** because you give **FREE** a Silver Aluminum Thimble with every two packages. Your neighbors buy you out in a few minutes.

WE TRUST YOU **Write plainly your Name and Address** (use postal), ordering 25 papers of Needles and 12 Thimbles. We mail postpaid, at once. Sell and return our $1 25 and we will send you **at once**, a dandy **Football**, all charges paid by us. We also give 200 other presents for selling Gold Eye Needles. **Order to-day**—extra prize for quick work. Big cash commission if you prefer. We will give you all the nice things you want.

WAVERLY SUPPLY COMPANY Box 584 MONONGAHELA, PA.

Advertisement. Advertisement. Advertisement.

The Real Taft

LET'S look for a moment upon the *Man* side of this Presidential Contest.

It's a mighty important deciding factor after all.

Platforms may be built and policies framed that are full of glowing promises.

But a platform, after all, is only words.

The man behind the words either gives them *living action* or proves them a hollow mockery.

The great American privilege is to discount assertions which lack the proof.

And, in this matter of before-election promises, the public has become a pretty critical judge.

"Who is going to do it?"—and "What has he *already* done to *prove* that he will do it?"—

These are the questions the people of America are asking seriously right now.

You, Mr. Farmer, want an answer to that question.

You are used to dealing man-to-man—out in the open places—where you can read in the other fellow's eye what he is, and where he stands.

You know that the prettiest *reading* platform ever written, the finest future-administration program ever mapped out, is worthless unless there is a *straight-seeing* man, with a *steel-backbone* to carry it out.

A man with the courage to do his own thinking—to fight his own fight—without bluster or buncombe—without chasing moonbeams.

That man in the present contest is William Howard Taft.

* * *

And that you may know him better as a Man—that you may decide from that knowledge whether or not he is *your* kind of a Man for president—these personal facts are given.

For thirty years Mr. Taft has been active in public life.

But with him *public life* and *publicity* have meant two entirely different things.

He not only refuses to seek notoriety, but he continually avoids it.

He hasn't any desire to see his name "on the front page," nor his portrait in colors on every dead wall.

He is not the man behind the megaphone.

This is not from mock modesty—but because Mr. Taft prefers to let the things he does stand on their own merits and prove in their results.

And because he has some "old-fashioned ideas" about the dignity of his office.

He doesn't send for reporters to tell the world of his greatness—nor for camera men to catch his latest pose.

* * *

Mr. Taft frankly admits that he is not a politician—which is true.

He is not a politician, but he *is* a statesman and a born judge. His grandfather and his father were both judges. His father left the Superior Court Bench to become a member of Grant's cabinet.

So William Howard Taft came by his judicial temperament, and broad, intelligent vision on public and corporate matters by inheritance.

Beginning with the practice of law, he was made Judge of the Superior Court, then Solicitor General at Washington, and after that Judge of the Sixth Federal Circuit—in direct line for the Supreme Bench.

But it was what Mr. Taft did in the Philippines that proved more than anything else in those early days, his real manhood, his courage, his sympathy and patience, his judicial fairness, his gift of leadership.

When President McKinley asked him to give up the bench and his prospect of promotion to the Supreme Court, and to "shoulder the white man's burden"—to go and teach the Filipinos self-government—

He put his own ambitions aside, and took up the thankless task.

The Filipinos were hostile, suspicious. They resented his coming. At first he was in serious personal danger.

His three years' work on the islands would have taken the heart out of a weaker man. But he remained.

How Taft won the Filipinos' friendship and confidence—how he convinced them that he was working unselfishly for them, and not against them—is history.

He gave them schools;honest courts of justice.

He secured for them the rights to buy lands on easy terms.

He was the Big Father to all the Islanders—and when he left, after starting them so well in the way to self-government,—it was to become Secretary of War and of our Insular Possessions, where he could still guard over them.

In Cuba, Mr. Taft restored peace between the warring factions and directed the reorganization of the self-government there on a practical, successful basis.

His work in connection with the Panama Canal showed his wonderful foresight. As Secretary of War he made the peaceful completion of the Canal possible by pacifying the Panama Government and people, who were suspicious that our Government had gone to the Isthmus to build a rival State, instead of a Canal.

As President, he has advanced the work upon the Canal more than anyone before him, and he now looks forward to its completion in seventeen months.

His whole administration has been a record of *doing things*.

Mr. Taft during his administration has cut out every needless governmental expenditure. He has introduced economies wherever possible. Has added to the country's income.

Under his administration the *shortage* of nearly fifty-nine million dollars in the U. S. Treasury at the end of Roosevelt's administration was changed to a *surplus* of over forty-seven million dollars in 1911.

Taft's record as a Man and as an Executive is clean.

It stands for sincerity and justice—betterment of conditions for every one.

It stands for Progress.

—Without regard to popular applause.

* * *

The Third Term Candidate has been touring the country preaching the gospel of a "change."

He has attacked Mr. Taft from every angle.

His pet charge—the shot that he fires again and again—is that Mr. Taft is "boss-ridden"—that he is clay in the hands of others.

From what Mr. Taft's record proves him to be, this is the most foolish of charges.

No Sir, Mr. Taft is certainly *not* "boss-ridden," nor driven by any interest but the people's interests.

There never was a president who stuck straighter and truer to his own ideas and principles.

There never was a president who more completely and positively refused to be influenced against his own convictions.

And nobody knows this better than Mr. Roosevelt.

For if Mr. Taft had been weak-spined, docile,—a puppet in Roosevelt's hands,—*there would never have been a new party.*

* * *

President Taft does not "play politics."

His political advisers, who have urged him to do this thing and that for policy's sake, have found him not to be moved the fraction of an inch.

That he would "rather be right than President" is not a mere saying with him. He lives up to it in every action every day of his life.

Like Lincoln, he does the thing without fear, on his own decision,—"as is given him the power to see the right."

* * *

President Taft knew when he asked for a Tariff Board that he would injure his political chances. But that didn't stop him.

It didn't prevent him from lifting the Tariff investigation clear of politics, and appointing a commission of competent men of all political creeds to get at the heart of the actual net costs of production and manufacture, at home and abroad.

Mr. Taft fought for this Board almost single handed, and against his political friends,—against Congress. But he won.

He was the first President to lay his hand upon real Tariff needs.

The first President to show the nerve to go into the Tariff in an absolutely scientific way.

For example, his Tariff Board has given the government the first thorough and complete report on wool and cotton that was ever secured.

Such a body must be maintained. For without it there cannot be a just and safe revision that will consider equally and fairly the interests of everyone.

* * *

President Taft proved himself not a politician when he made a working weapon of the Sherman Law, which his predecessor had used for oratory and effect, but not for action—

When he brought to time The American Tobacco Company, The American Sugar Refining Company, the U. S. Steel Corporation, The Standard Oil Company, and many other corporations that were in violation of the "Anti-Trust" Law.

Mr. Taft secured forty-five indictments during his first three years in office, as opposed to a total of thirty-three indictments secured during the administrations of Harrison, Cleveland, McKinley, and Roosevelt—or all the indictments secured since the Sherman Law went into effect.

President Taft did not *talk* on the Monopoly Question—he *acted* on it.

And the result is, that independent manufacturers in all of these different lines today, have a fairer show than they ever had before.

He protected the Wool Industry in America, by his veto—in the face of loud popular objection—of the Democratic Wool Bill.

Under his administration agricultural study and development increased every year, till last year the farmers had the benefit of the greatest amount ever spent by the government on agricultural work—Sixteen Million Dollars.

But, note please, this year the "farmer loving" (?) Democrats, represented by a Democratic House, *cut down* the agricultural appropriation, instead of giving it a well warranted increase.

That's a sample of the vaunted Democratic "friendship for the farmer."

* * *

Mr. Taft saw the weakness in the present Patent laws—the opportunities they give for monopoly in manufacturing. He recommended laws that would tend to control special patent privileges.

* * *

Yet Mr. Taft had always supported legitimate business—large or small.

His wise and just Tariff policy—his protective Americanism—has given a confidence to National industries they have never felt before.

Mills, mines, and factories are running full time; there are no financial troubles. The farmer's market—the home market—is right at his door—ready to consume practically his entire production. And his products bring a higher value than ever before in the history of the country.

* * *

These things all prove the standard of the *man*.

They prove his sterling personal worth, his keen judicial sense, his broad-gauge policies, his business understanding.

And they certainly prove that the country is safe with Mr. Taft at its head.

And they prove that there is an even better and bigger Prosperity ahead, under the policies of this quiet, firm and forceful man, who knows his mind, and is not to be turned from his own wise decisions.

REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE
CHARLES D. HILLES, Chairman
JAMES B. REYNOLDS, Secretary

Chicago Ledger

Entered as second-class matter June 25, 1885, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under act of March 3, 1879.

Published Every Saturday
By W. D. BOYCE CO., CHICAGO, ILL.
500 Dearborn Avenue.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Single subscriptions to The Chicago Ledger by mail $1.00 a year, 50 cents for six months, in advance. Remittances should be made by Bank Draft, Registered Letter, Postoffice or Express money Order, payable to The Chicago Ledger. Subscription price in Canada $1.50 a year. We do not send receipts for money paid on subscriptions; the address tab on your paper shows the date to which your subscription is paid.

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The Ledger employs no traveling agents to solicit subscriptions, and every person working in that capacity is a fraud. No person is authorized to take subscriptions for the Ledger unless he or she be well known in the city or village where they have been appointed agents to sell this paper every week. A liberal reward will be paid for evidence that will enable us to arrest and convict such persons as are now traveling from town to town in different sections of this country, claiming to be agents of the Ledger and thereby defrauding the people. Beware of strangers.

ADVERTISING.

Advertising rate $2.25 per Agate Line, per insertion for advertisements in the The Chicago Ledger and The Saturday Blade combined. These two weeklies have an average circulation of

1,000,000
COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS.

Posing as a good example is no easy job.

Wise people worry over things fools may never think of.

And some men call swindling their neighbors honest toil.

When you meet a trouble borrower lend him all you have.

If you can't lay up something for a rainy day, salt it down.

Lives of some men oft remind us to ask: "What's the use?"

The man who steals a girl's heart is liable to servitude for life.

The road to ruin is illuminated by the red noses along the way.

Most people enjoy warmed over love almost as well as they do hash.

The more sympathy a man generates the less money he hands out.

The average man thinks more of his wife than he is willing to admit.

A man seldom attempts to escape any temptation that looks good to him.

Keep an eye on your friends; you know what to expect from your enemies.

A manly man is one who centers his affections on one woman—at a time.

Loafers are wise to the fact that it is always the open season for killing time.

The easiest road to wealth is to have a rich relative die and leave you a fortune.

Many a man gets the reputation of being a "good fellow" while going to the bad.

A man gets but little sympathy when a banana skin downs him or he falls in love.

A feeling of superiority is about all the satisfaction some people get out of being good.

A man may do just as he pleases, but he doesn't enjoy it unless he has a wife to object.

Every man likes to believe that he is a light sleeper—even if he doesn't hear the alarm clock.

He's the meanest kind of a thief who will rob his own family to pay for another man's drink.

And many a man makes a strenuous effort to recognize his duty so that he will be in a position to dodge it.

If a girl who is in the matrimonial market has a mother who is stout, the damsel is always careful to explain that she takes after her father.

WANT ADS

Want and Classified Advertising not less than 14 words accepted for insertion in the Ledger and Blade at 25 cents per word.

AUTOMOBILES

PUT an Air-Friction Carburetor on your car. Start easy in cold weather. Save one-third gas. Add one-third power. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. Half price until January 1. Air-Friction Carburetor Co., Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS WANTED

$250.00 paid for distributing 2,000 free packages Perfumed Soap Powder in your town. Men or women. No money required. B. W. Ward & Co., 1770 Berteau ave., Chicago.

AGENTS! Everybody's Doing It!! Send $10. Get new 36-lb. Feather Bed with 6-lb. pair Pillows Free. Freight prepaid on all. New Feathers. Best Ticking. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Good chance for live agent. Write today. Reference, Commercial National Bank. Turner & Cornwall, Dep't G, Charlotte, N. C.

$7.00 per hundred for collecting names and addresses. Steady work; stamp for particulars. F. Howard Co., Keymar, Md., Dep't 5.

WE WANT 100,000 live agents at once. Big profits and valuable prizes given to our representatives. We ship you all the goods you want on credit. Write at once for particulars. Give references in first letter to save time. Address Credit "A", Box 3383, Boston, Mass.

AGENTS, Salesmen—Make good Profit, selling the New Idea Combination Purse, Billfold, Cardcase, Identification Pocket, Memobook, Pencil (all in one) and other Novelties. Sample 50c. S. Robbins, Mfg. Leather Goods, 4104 12th Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

AGENTS—Something new—fastest sellers and quickest repeater on earth. Permanent, profitable business. Good for $50 to $75 a week. Write for particulars. American Products Co., 6165 Sycamore Street, Cincinnati, O.

WANTED—Agents to sell rich looking imported 36x68 rugs. $1 each. R. H. Carter, Milan, Tenn., sold 115 in four days. His profit $51. You can do as well. Write for sample offer and unique selling plan. Exclusive territory. Condon, Importer, Stonington, Maine.

$40.00 Weekly Commission, selling Trees, Plants, Ornamentals. Pennurco, Girard, Pa.

MAKE Money On The Side Introducing our Latest Sick and Accident Policies. Has all others "skinned a mile." Write today, Pauley Insurance, Buffalo, New York.

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Didn't See It.

"Now," said the city lawyer, "please tell us how the altercation began."

"I didn't see any altercation," replied the witness. "I was too busy watchin' the fight."

* * *

A CHANCE TO MAKE MONEY.

There will be just such a rush for Ozark fruit lands which are being distributed this Fall, as there was to Oklahoma when it was opened for settlement. There is no better fruit district on earth. You are required to have your land planted in fruit trees within three years. An authorized improvement company will do all improving on the installment plan, you paying $10 a month. While the trees are small, vegetables will be raised between the rows, and you are guaranteed 8 per cent profit the first year and more than that the second and third year. For particulars address the Ozark Fruit & Land Co., Block 120, Pittsburgh, Pa. The company will attend to your orchard for one-third the crop. Your two-thirds should bring you an annual profit of from $100 to $150 per acre. This is surely the chance of a life time.

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—Advertisement.

Unnecessary Question.

The damage suit was on, and Bildad's chauffeur was testifying for the plaintiff.

"Now, you say," said the pompous lawyer for the defendant, "that at this point the two cars traveling at the rate of thirty miles an hour came together head on. Then what did you do?"

The witness gazed wearily at his questioner.

"Why," he said, **"I turned to my wife,** who was brushing the baby's hair in the tonneau, and I said that I thought the dumplings must be done by this time——"

"Bang!" interrupted the Judge's gavel. "Stenographer," said his honor, "strike that fool answer from the record."

"And doesn't the question go with it, Judge?" asked the witness meekly.

"Sure!" said his honor, forgetting the dignity of his calling for the moment.

* * *

Too Liberal.

Wife—"Here's an advertisement in the paper that you'd better look into. It says a man is wanted, and he won't be worked to death, and he'll get paid enough to live on."

Husband—"He won't be worked to death, eh?"

"Yes; and they promise to pay enough to live on."

"Huh! Some catch about that!"

A Libel on the South.

Chairman James, at a dinner during the Democratic convention in Baltimore, praised the South.

"It is a libel on the South to deem it sleepy," he said indignantly. "'The sleepy South,' forsooth! Why, I believe that there are certain untraveled Americans who actually believe there is some truth in the drummer's yarn about Nola Chucky.

"A soap drummer, you know, declared that, on a hot August afternoon, he penetrated into the back room of a Nola Chucky grocery, to find the blinds down and the grocer taking a nap upon a heap of dusty potato bags.

"'Colonel,' said the drummer, 'there's two customers in the store.'

"'S-sh!' said the grocer, putting his finger on his lip. 'S-sh. Keep quiet. Make no noise. They'll go away, mebbe.'"

* * *

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—Advertisement.

Our Boys' Corner

Rocky Mountain Perils

Or, THE BOYS WHO WON

By William Ressman Andrews

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CHAPTER I.

OVER THE BRINK.

GOOD heavens! He's tumbled over the brink. Nothing can save him! It's a thousand foot drop."

Eight boyish faces drawn tense with horror peered over the mountain trail into the yawning abyss. Lew Dwyer, patrol leader of the other Boy Scouts, seven in number, crawled along a ledge projecting over the chasm. The rest waited anxiously for a word from their leader. None spoke. Death must have come to the unfortunate man without warning. It seemed unescapable. They felt deeply the apparent loss of their scoutmaster, Mr. Curley.

Even the pack-laden burros realized that something unusual had happened. The six sturdy, sure-footed little animals set up a loud braying at once. It sounded in the boys' ears like a funeral dirge, and the doleful noise sent a chill through them.

Lew fully expected to see lying on the divide's rocky bottom the crushed and broken remains of a man they had learned to look up to with the greatest respect. His clever attainments in woodcraft and scouting made him the boys' idol. He was a born leader, and a trainer of boys in the sterling qualities which make manly men out of stout-hearted lads, like the youths in our story.

But a great surprise was in store for the patrol leader. Lew found that Mr. Curley was not stretched out lifeless below. Neither was he on a narrow ledge twelve feet under the spot where he had fallen over the edge of the precipice, the only object in sight wich could have broken his fall. He had stopped to tighten a strap. The path was very narrow, but he had not time to think of the danger. The burro's pack, containing some of the most valuable part of the camping outfit, was almost dropping off the animal's back. The boys wished that he had let the outfit go.

If the scoutmaster was not in sight, where could he be? If he had gone to the bottom his body would have been in plain view. The canyon floor was singularly free from bowlders, or other obstacles around which he might have rolled.

Lew's eyes suddenly widened as he looked again at the second ledge. There was a six-foot opening just above it. In the first swift glance over the edge he had failed to see this, but the next instant be noticed it. Mr. Curley might have glimpsed the opening in his breathless descent and sensed its meaning. The moment he struck the ledge he must have rolled inward toward what his lightning-working faculties told him was a cave.

Young Dwyer looked at the spot intently. He was able to see inside about three feet. His eyes penetrated no farther into the gloom. If Curley were there, Lew thought he must be several feet back from the mouth of the 'cave.' There was nothing, however, to indicate his presence, the lad noted with a peculiar feeling of misgiving.

The patrol leader wasted very little time in making further scrutiny. His work in scouting had made him a boy of prompt action. He was resourceful, too. The Boy Scouts' motto, "Be prepared," was the mainspring of everything he did. Consequently, Lew Dwyer's mind was busy with rescue plans.

"Bring a rope, Jim," he called to Tisdale, a young scout who had been elected corporal, the next in command. "Then you fellows lower it to the ledge below. There's a cave opening onto it. Mr. Curley must have hit the flat rock and rolled inside. Don't see him in the canyon. That's the only explanation. If he's in the cave there's a chance he's still alive, though he may be unconscious."

Already at the first word from their leader the boys began to prepare for their part in the rescue. A rope was quickly uncoiled from one of the burros. It was ticklish business. The whole trail was quite narrow for a quarter of a mile. It was the worst spot they had yet encountered in their vacation trip to the Rocky Mountains. The lads worked cautiously. Presently a half-inch manila rope was secured on the side of the chasm, its ends dangling in front of the cave. Lew crawled back to the trail.

"Now, boys," he said, cheerily, "show what steady hands you have."

He let himself over the side sailor fashion, while as many of the others—only two would the narrow space permit—kept a tight hold on the rope. A four-inch upright piece of stone running five feet along the very edge of the canyonside afforded the two boys a brace for their feet. If their weight proved too much the thin ridge would crumble, and they yould plunge instantly over the brink. That would mean death to both, for it was not likely that anything would interpose and break their sickening flight through the air to a horrible end, if the brace gave way.

A large iron spike had been driven in a crevice as a support for the rope. Jim Tisdale and Billy Morrison held it in their hands. They were older and stronger than the others, except Lew. He thought on that account they were better suited for this post of danger.

The rest of the boys were told to drive the pack animals on ahead. The trail was left clear. Lew had taken his first-aid-to-the-injured kit from one of the burros while the other boys were getting the rope ready. After leading the animals out of the way, the boys leaned over the cliff.

He lowered himself hand under hand. Except the two boys holding it, who could not see from their position what was going on below, every eye was fixed on the form of the nervy lad making the terrible descent.

Presently his feet touched the solid ledge, and he sighed with relief.

The boys' anxious hearts stopped beating so fast and became normal again, when he ceased to dangle a thousand feet in midair. None had feared for his ability to take care of himself, or the cool heads and strong arms of their two comrades. Their anxiety had to do with the rope and its fastening.

What if it had slipped? Brave as they were they shuddered at the thought of what might happen in such a calamity. The danger was not over—it had only begun. It would be harder for Lew to come back. This was bad enough, but how about the additional weight of a grown man? Was he sufficiently strong to cling to the rope with the heavy burden—as Mr. Curley, they thought, must have been badly hurt and unconscious—while being drawn up the cliff? The boys never doubted his grit and determination, but was Lew equal to the demands on his strength?

There was another terrible consideration that now loomed before their glaring eyes. The combined weight of boy and man—assuming that Lew could hold on to Mr. Curley—might prove too much for the rope. There was danger of the sharp stone ridge cutting the strands. Both would be hurled to the bottom. But the final peril to stand out like a hideous nightmare was worse than the rest, for the other dangers might be overcome. The last one could not be. More than two boys were needed to haul up the victim and his rescuer, and—there was only space for two people to take hold of the rope at one time.

The boys on the trail—where, dangerous as it was, they were in comparative safety—had not thought of these things before Lew's descent. If they had they would not have deserted their scoutmaster—or any one else at such a time. But they would have tried to think of providing against these obstacles before endangering another life.

It was different with young Dwyer. He had taken in all these things at the very first sign of danger, without frightening his friends by mentioning them. He intended to go down to the rescue, and trust to some lucky chance for making his escape. If not that, he expected to rely on his ingenuity to get him out of the difficulty somehow. This sounds like a lot of assurance. But his training in scoutship had made him wonderfully quick to observe things, to make lightning-like deductions, and to solve a problem before others could see anything. This is what had happened the moment his feet touched the ledge and he saw the opening. He knew that it was more than a mere cleft in the rock, such as the place which an eagle would select because of its inacessibility. The one glance determined the nature of the place. Lew decided that it was a cave made by the hand of man. The scarred surface of the cliff showed the marks of tools. Then, he reasoned, the cave had some other outlet. The moment he realized this he shouted a word of encouragement for his safety to his friends.

"There's some other way to get out than shinning up the rope again," he

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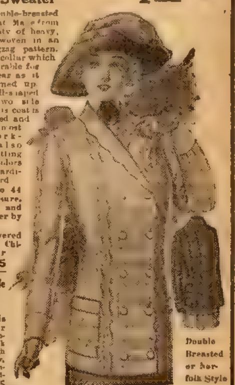
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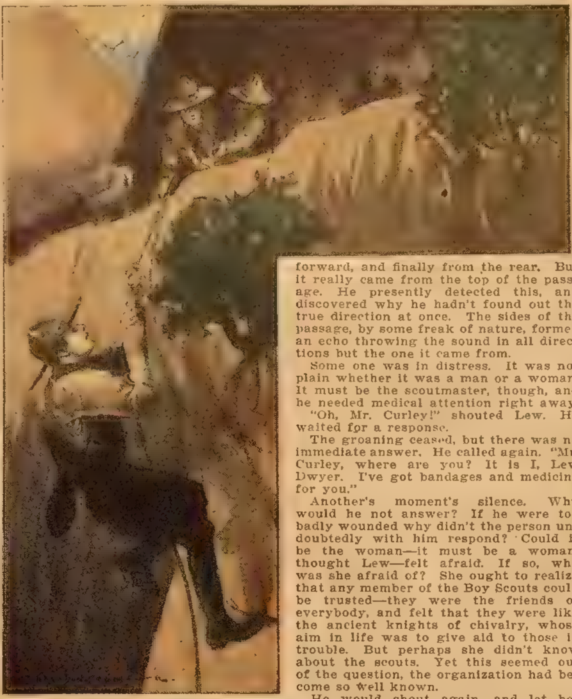
said. "I don't see Mr. Curley, but his footprints show that he isn't at the bottom of the gluch and there are marks of other feet. Now I'm off to find him."

Lew started his exploration of the passage, determined to rescue the scoutmaster, even if he should prove to be in hostile hands. Dwyer was governed in his actions by the principles which guide the behavior of the Boy Scouts of America, and other scouts the world over. They are to do one's duty to God and country; to help other people at all times; and to obey the scouts' law. Just now he recalled the part of the law which applied to the present instance. It consisted of sacrificing everything, even safety, to the helping of injured persons, and always to be prepared to save life. Thus our hero was actuated by the noble motives that constitute the creed of over 30,000 young Americans, to say nothing of the vast number of English, Australian, and Canadian Boy Scouts.

Lew had not got many yards from the mouth before the sunlight ceased to penetrate the interior. He brought out from an inside pocket of his khaki suit an electric lantern to find his way. Two sets of footprints were revealed. Lew bent down and examined them with the eye of an expert. His scout practice had fitted him for seeing more in a footprint than a boy who had never taken up scouting. Thanks to the efficient instruction of Mr. Curley he had learned a great deal about tracking. He knew how to read the meaning of broken twigs, trampled grass, scraps of food, and other apparently insignificant things, as well as large marks like footprints.



He lowered himself hand under hand.

Therefore, what he now saw revealed volumes to his keen eyesight. One set of marks had unquestionably been made by the scoutmaster's heavy tramping shoes. Lew was too familiar with their cut not to know the kind of impression they made. It seemed from their position that the owner was leaning on some one for support while walking. His heart beat wildly at the discovery. First the uncertainty of Mr. Curley's disappearance was practically over. Secondly, he was alive. The position of the footprints and their pressure in the dirt showed this.

But he discovered something else, another set of marks, which he did not take time to examine closely until now. The footprints had been made by a pair of moccasins. They were smaller than a man's. Evidently Mr. Curley had been rescued by a woman—probably an Indian girl. That seemed strange. Lew supposed he was miles from a reservation. Indeed, he was. That made her presence all the more mysterious.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE CAVE.

Presently Lew came to a passage crossing the first one at right angles. The trail turned abruptly to his left. It was easy to follow. The footprints were still plain. But another hundred yards the marks suddenly disappeared, as if the feet of the man and woman had been completely swallowed up. Lew felt that his trip was unavailing, but this was only momentarily. Another hundred yards brought him to the footprints again.

The incident was nothing to get worried about, but for a second Lew's spirits sank. He thought of the terrible accident that had happened to the man who had taught the boys all they knew of woodcraft and scoutship—the man who had been like a father to them, when their own fathers showed their trust in his fitness for the task of looking after them on their vacation trip in the vast wilderness of the Rocky Mountains. Lew's momentary spell of depression pictured the total disappearance of Mr. Curley, without the ghost of a chance of learning his fate. Happily this gloomy view of the accident flitted by almost instantly.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Lew. Then he breathed a sigh of relief, like one awakening from a bad dream, who feels grateful to find it was not real.

He could not tell how many hundred yards more he had gone when a low moan fell upon his ears. He stopped short and listened. The sound was hard to locate. It seemed at first to come from the left, then the right, straight forward, and finally from the rear. But it really came from the top of the passage. He presently detected this, and discovered why he hadn't found out the true direction at once. The sides of the passage, by some freak of nature, formed an echo throwing the sound in all directions but the one it came from.

Some one was in distress. It was not plain whether it was a man or a woman. It must be the scoutmaster, though, and he needed medical attention right away.

"Oh, Mr. Curley!" shouted Lew. He waited for a response.

The groaning ceased, but there was no immediate answer. He called again. "Mr. Curley, where are you? It is I, Lew Dwyer. I've got bandages and medicine for you."

Another's moment's silence. Why would he not answer? If he were too badly wounded why didn't the person undoubtedly with him respond? Could it be the woman—it must be a woman, thought Lew—felt afraid. If so, who was she afraid of? She ought to realize that any member of the Boy Scouts could be trusted—they were the friends of everybody, and felt that they were like the ancient knights of chivalry, whose aim in life was to give aid to those in trouble. But perhaps she didn't know about the scouts. Yet this seemed out of the question, the organization had become so well known.

He would shout again, and let her understand that he was there for only a good purpose. Evidently Mr. Curley was too far gone to say much, else he would have told her the moment he heard Lew's voice that the person in the passageway was a member of his patrol.

"Oh, Mr. Curley, this is Dwyer! How shall I find you?" Then an idea flashed upon the young speaker. "If the person with you can't understand English, try to make some kind of a sign in my favor."

He paused in brief expectancy. As if in answer came a groan, louder than the others. Lew felt that the woman—he could not get the idea out of his head that there was a woman in these mysterious proceedings—would presently make her appearance. But where from? No signs could he detect of a secret entrance. Yet there seemed no other way of reaching the place Mr. Curley was in.

A guttural sound came from a grating in the roof of the corridor. Lew flashed his electric lantern at the spot. He saw a square hole cut out of the rock, guarded by thick iron bars half an inch apart. The moment he heard the sound he started. It was the word meaning "wait" in the Blackfeet language. Lew had been studying Indian dialects. He was a Western boy, and such a study appealed to him, whereas an Eastern lad would have no interest in them.

"I will," he answered in the Blackfeet tongue.

"Ah, you know my language?" came the quick, breathless question. There was the faintest tone of suspicion, as if the speaker thought the unusual incident denoted the presence of an enemy, for who but some Indian would be speaking the same language. The tone—in a feminine voice—conveyed this meaning to Lew's quick ears. He hastened to assure the speaker.

(Continued on page twenty-six.)

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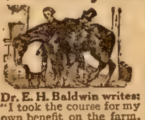

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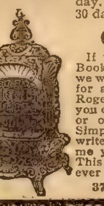

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Rocky Mountain Perils.

(Continued from page twenty-four.)

"I'm a friend of the wounded man," he said in the Blackfeet language. "Don't delay. Every second counts. I've medicine for him."

The appeal seemed to satisfy. The next moment the lad heard a peculiar grating sound, like a door swinging on rusty hinges. He flashed the light in every direction but saw nothing. The door was well concealed. He could not detect anything in the sides of the passage indicating an exit.

"This way," a voice suddenly commanded at his elbow.

Again he flashed his electric lantern. A beautiful Indian maiden stood a few feet behind him. She was of medium height and wore a brown cloth skirt decorated with colored beads. Her black hair hung over her shoulders in glossy profusion. Eyes of liquid depths that could melt in loving tenderness—or gleam with the hard glitter of aborigine hatred on occasion—now shone with inquiring interest in the electric's rays. The girl's swift glance appraised the young scout, and her judgment of him seemed to be one of approval.

"This way," she repeated.

Lew's hat was already in his hand. He bowed respectfully and hurried on behind her. A dozen yards away they came to a secret door. It was faced with stone joined so cleverly that most people could pass up and down the passage a lifetime without suspecting its existence. Of course, if Lew had had time and it had been necessary he could have found it unaided.

The girl tripped up a pair of stone steps. The moment her companion got inside she pressed a secret spring and the door flew back into place. She turned to her right at the landing, opened another door, a wooden affair of heavy timber, as if it had been made to withstand assaults of an enemy, once he gained the secret entrance.

They entered a wonderful room. Lew had barely time to glance at it, for he saw Mr. Curley lying on a couch and felt that he ought to direct his attention to him without delay. But in the few steps he had to take across the room to get to the scoutmaster his eye took in a sweeping glance of his surroundings.

The place reminded the boy of an Arabian Nights' tale. The room arched to a peak, forming a dome in solid granite. Navajo blankets, woven in large stripes and squares of yellow, red, blue, and green formed a kind of wainscoting. Trophies of the chase hung upon the walls above the line of blankets. There were numerous Indian headdresses, decorated in gaudy tints and turkey feathers. Nearly every Indian tribe west of the Mississippi River was represented. The skins of bears, jaguars, mountain lions and buffaloes covered the floor. These rugs yielded to the feet and gave one a tread of catlike silence.

Bows and arrows, probably of earlier generations, were interspersed with more modern repeating rifles on the walls between the headdresses. In one corner was a collection of dried herbs and simples, apparently Indian remedies.

Directly in front of Lew on the other side of the room was a couch. On it lay the form of a sick man. It was Mr. Curley. On a table at the man's head was, strange to say, a lamp. It seemed out of place amid all the relics of barbaric splendor, but showed that the Indian girl was not averse to some modern conveniences.

Lew had unslung his medical kit the moment he entered the room.

"Here I am, Mr. Curley," he said, advancing to the injured man's side.

On getting close he noticed that some one had already administered first aid. Bandages were wrapped around the scoutmaster's left arm and right ankle. And it showed the work of a skilful hand. A glance at Mr. Curley's face relieved Lew somewhat. He saw that his injuries were not so bad as he had imagined.

"Do you feel able to speak?" he asked.

The scoutmaster seized his hand, and managed to murmur, "Presently."

Lew administered a stimulant. An examination of the unfortunate man's hurts showed that while the work had been done well, in a primitive way, he could administer first aid advantageously, on account of superior knowledge—obtained from Mr. Curley himself.

Lew blessed the day he became a scout and learned such a practical thing as first aid. He could not help comparing the situation with one where a boy not knowing about first aid would be useless. As the young scout unwound the bandages, applied the necessary ointment and deftly put on fresh ones the Indian maiden stood by watching him attentively. As a rule people of Indian race scorn to let any one think them curious, and it is considered beneath their dignity to ask questions. But this girl acted differently.

"You a doctor?" she asked, speaking for the first time since he had come into the room.

She addressed him in English, to his astonishment. Lew felt surprised, wondering why she had not spoken to him in his own language a short while before instead of making her presence known in Blackfeet. He was to learn the reason later. He answered the question without betraying his wonder.

"No, I'm no doctor," replied the lad. Then proudly: "It's a part of the useful training in the Boy Scouts to learn a few simple things like this to be prepared for emergencies."

She nodded, and he went on: "I see you, too, have learned what to do in a case like this." He took it for granted that she was responsible for the care Mr. Curley had received.

"I learned it from the medicine man of our tribe," she said. "We Indians must know these things, or we'd die when accident overtakes us alone in the forest, on the desert, or in the lonely fastness of the still mountains."

She spoke excellent English, almost without an accent. Lew's curiosity was aroused. Who was the beautiful Indian girl apparently living alone in the strangest kind of a house he had ever heard or read about. But there was not much time for speculation just now. His mind had to be on the patient.

When later the scoutmaster was able to talk Lew found out what had happened. He told him what the Indian girl, through modesty, refused to say a word about. The first part of the story was a verification of Lew's deductions the moment he saw two pairs of footprints. Mr. Curley had known enough to roll inward the moment he struck the ledge. But even then he might have gone to his death in the canyon below if he had not been snatched from the ledge by a pair of quick hands. The girl had just reached the mouth of the cave to reconnoiter the opposite hills. He fell almost at her feet. Her quick wit saved him. She saw at once what had happened and drew him back from danger. He was taken to the secret chamber.

She was strong enough to carry a man of Mr. Curley's spare frame. Primeval necessity had taught her ancestors a trick that had been handed down to her with other useful things. She balanced him on one shoulder, his head and arms hanging down her back about on a line with her waist, and his legs hung limply in front of her. The weight of his body was evenly distributed, and by clutching one ankle she was able to hold her burden steady while walking. Of course, this could be kept up only for short intervals, which accounted for the double footprints.

This might seem unusual, but it must be remembered that she was an Indian girl used to an outdoor life. It made her stronger than the majority of city boys. She lost no time in getting him to the secret chamber, where she did all she could for the injured man.

Lew's face showed under the glow of the lamp his admiration for the resourcefulness, strength, and prowess the girl seemed to be gifted with in addition to her beauty. At the same time his thoughts dwelt on the mystery of her being in such a strange place—for what object, what end?

The question recurred constantly. He did not feel at liberty to ask inquisitive questions. He thought of Mr. Curley. But then he had not been there time enough to learn anything, in his state.

Lew got up to leave. "I must go and tell the boys I've found you. They will certainly be glad to learn you're not seriously injured." He had found that Mr. Curley had not broken any bones, but he was badly bruised, and the shock of the fall had made his injuries very painful. The lad turned to the girl.

"Will you kindly tell me how I can get back to the trail quickly?" The rest of the boys are anxiously waiting for my return to find out how your patient is."

The girl motioned. "I will show you," she said quietly, as she led the way. At the door she turned and looked solicitously at the sick man. "I'll be back right away."

The scoutmaster responded weakly. His lips moved in pain, but he managed to let her know that he was not in need of any immediate attention. Her gaze rested ever so little on the handsome features of the injured man, and Lew noted it. Could the nurse have found another interest than the humane one of wanting to help a suffering fellow creature? If that were the case it had not taken long for her feelings to be aroused. But perhaps Lew had imagined all this.

CHAPTER III.

THE MOUNTAIN SHRUB.

The girl and lad followed the main passage until it brought them to a huge slab of rock that blocked the way completely. It proved to be a door like the first one Lew saw. A touch of a secret spring, which the girl was able to find without a light, made it slide back into the mountainside like a folding door. The other had moved on hinges and swung back and forth. Lew looked down and saw by the aid of his electric lantern that the door before them moved on grooves worn smooth by the use of countless years. For already he had come to the conclusion that the cave and its passages were very ancient.

At first he supposed they were part of an underground retreat built by the Aztecs, or the Toltecs, the mysterious race that lived in North America before them. But Lew dismissed this supposition when he remembered that both those races probably lived no farther north than

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Mexico. The more likely deduction was that the unknown Cave Dwellers were responsible for it. Lew and the Boy Scouts were close to the part of the Southwest where the remains of the Cave Dwellers have been found from time to time. But explorers had evidently missed this spot. Lew had read considerable about the various localities where the caves are in evidence, but he could not remember this mountain. His memory had not played him false, either. So far, it was unknown to any one but the Indian maiden and one other, her brother. He was away on a trip north of them to get supplies.

These two—brother and sister had made it their home for two years They stumbled on it by accident when hiding in the mountains from the chief of the Comanches, who, becoming enamoured of the girl's wonderful beauty, wanted to make her his wife. She, however, hated the chief. And she had reason. The man had raided the camp of her family and ruthlessly murdered her father, mother, sisters, and all her brothers except the one now sharing this fastness with her.

The brother swore vengeance. For years he had stalked the chief, trying to get a chance at the Comanche, who, in turn, was equally vigilant. He set his men to watching the Blackfeet. There were so many against one that he had to remain on the defensive. When he found the cave he rejoiced. It would afford a safe hiding-place for his sister while he was away. This accounted for the girl's speaking in her native tongue to Lew. She wondered whether he was alone. It was time for her brother to come back, and she was in hopes of his being in the passage at the time. She had learned English at a mission when a child.

The girl had gone to the ledge under the trail to watch for signs of her brother's return when Mr. Curley met with his accident. She was scrutinizing the vast expanse of hills and distant valleys that stretched out before the cave. Lew learned all this later, when he and the other Boy Scouts had gained the confidence of the girl and her brother.

Why did the girl respond to the necessity of the helpless so readily the moment a strange man fell at her feet in the retreat it was necessary for their safety to try to keep secret? A woman's heart is the same the world over. Though the Blackfeet girl had reason to distrust everybody, she felt the universal feminine impulse to relieve suffering. She saw the helpless paleface on the brink of death, and her woman's heart yearned to save him. And when she had time to look full into his countenance, she felt thankful that she had saved the paleface. There was something about his bronzed, weatherbeaten features that aroused fond memories. It took her back to the days that she lived happily with her family in the tribal village.

Among the handsomest braves of her people was one young man whose eyes had looked meaningly into hers, and she approved. The scoutmaster was the living image of the Indian who had won the girl's love. And now Hiantha—that was her name—thought of the lover she had not seen for so long. When the Comanches raided the village he disappeared. He was never heard from. She wondered if he had been killed outright while defending against the unwonted attack, or whether he had been made a prisoner and tortured later.

Somehow she could not bring herself to believe him dead. All the time she and her brother had remained in hiding she vaguely looked forward to the time when she would see her lover again. The resemblance between him and the stranger she considered a good omen.

A short way beyond the sliding stone door Hiantha and Lew made an abrupt turn into another passage. A glimmer of light stole through a crevice in the wall in front of him. The girl stepped forward.

"We're here," she said.

She moved cautiously to what proved to be a thick clump of shrubs growing on the sloping mountainside. She slowly parted the bushes, so as not to attract attention of any one outside whom she did not want to take cognizance of their surroundings. But there was no one in sight. She glided out of the thick, concealing, hardy growth, and stepped in full view of a flat shallow spot measuring half a dozen yards in diameter. It was located on the opposite side of a huge spur of rock that shut them off from the trail where the accident had occurred. The girl pointed to a path leading to it.

"You will probably find your friends over there," she said, pointing to a knoll half hidden by scrub pine. "I'll wait here for you."

She cast her eyes about as she spoke Her manner was that of one who felt it necessary to be on guard against danger all the time. Evidently she felt that there was a chance of some one trying to take her by surprise. Once, when she had gone a few miles away, she had almost fallen into the hands of her enemies. Only by the exercise of superior woodcraft was she able to escape their clutches. Craftily she covered her tracks, and the Indians sent from the Comanche Chief's camp lost her completely. Now she gazed about keenly. Nothing escaped her penetrating scrutiny.

Lew found the boys where she said he would see them. They were all there except Jim and Billy, who stayed on the trail waiting for Lew's return to the mouth of the cave. They were a manly looking lot in their khaki uniforms and brown belt sombreros.

"Kreeee! kreeee! kreeee."

At the sound of the eagle's cry, the boys looked in Lew's direction. He had attracted their attention by their patrol call. In the Boy Scouts each patrol has a call, the cry of some bird or animal, which is used for signaling purposes. Each patrol has one call, an no member in good standing ever uses the call of another patrol.

"Well, boys, here's Lew coming from the cave in some mysterious way," exclaimed Hen Curry.

The boys were very much surprised at Lew's sudden appearance from the rear when they expected to see him return from the trail—if at all. They rushed forward and shook hands, giving him the greeting a person gets who is being welcomed back from the borderland of death. Without waiting for eager questions from his friends, Lew plunged right into the events of the cave. The two boys holding the rope over the cliff and anxiously waiting for some signal of Lew's return to the mouth of the cave were called away from their wearing vigil.

"Remarkable!" exclaimed Corporal Jim Tisdale, as the lads were led by Hiantha to see Mr. Curley.

As they went along the secret passage, Frank Dunn, another of the scouts, noticed a small opening in one side that appeared to be a sort of entry to a large vault.

"What's in there, I wonder?" he asked himself.

He and the rest of the boys were to find out, and sooner than they imagined. when he told them about it later. It was to become a revelation to them. It might be said that the room, or rather its contents, would be the means of changing the course of their lives. Had they realized it then they would have bestowed curious and probably awed glances on the door of the vault.

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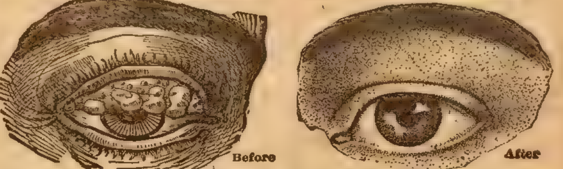

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Boy Scout Adventures

Or, Lost in the Everglades

By St. George Rathborne

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CHAPTER XI.

PLUCK WINS OUT AT LAST.

HALF an hour later Dolph came staggering into camp. Upon his back he was carrying a small deer, unmindful of the load, and just bubbling over with joy. For it was his first deer, and he seemed very proud of his accomplishment.

"There's your venison steak for dinner, partner," he said, as he tossed his burden down at the feet of the campkeeper.

"Good boy! You're the mighty Nimrod of the expedition. I heard you fire twice; how was that?" asked his cousin, looking up with a grin of pleasure on his face.

"Missed the first shot—too big a hurry I reckon. Then I took better aim the second time, and he dropped like a stone. I bled him, just as you told me to. But what are you grinning at so fiercely?" demanded Dolph, with a puzzled air.

"Huh. Perhaps you ain't the only one who has done something. See these fish here? Don't that look like I'd been busy? But that isn't all by a long shot."

"Go on and tell me what happened?" urged the other, impatiently.

"Where are you ears? Don't you hear something familiar?" demanded Amos.

Thereupon the returned hunter gave vent to a shout.

"The rotten little engine—you've tinkered it into shape again, and she's running just as smooth as if she'd never balked!"

"Just so. And tomorrow, when we draw out of here, I hope we'll go booming along as merrily as you please. It was so simple that I feel like kicking myself to think that it baffled me so long. But it's all right now; and she isn't going back on us again, I promise you," declared Amos.

After that they settled down to enjoying the whole day as only a pair of happy boys could, with plenty to eat in the larder, and not a single cloud looming up along the horizon. The venison steak proved pretty good; though perhaps had it been served to them at home they would have voted it dry and tough. But then in camp one forgets such things; game is the thing and imagination works overtime.

Later in the afternoon, to break the monotony, Amos picked up the rifle, and said he might take a little stroll around, to see if he could pick up anything. Dolph heard the gun not ten minutes later, and presently his chum hove in sight carrying something gray, that looked too big for a squirrel.

"Hello! you got a 'possum, did you? Well, perhaps I can tell you how the darkies cook them, only we haven't any yams to go with the little rascal, or an oven to roast him in," was the way the South Carolina boy greeted his cousin.

"Just what I want to try, for I've often heard how fine a dish 'possum was, and want to taste it. And I'm going to make an oven in the ground, same as the Indians do. By morning the bird will be done to a turn," remarked Amos.

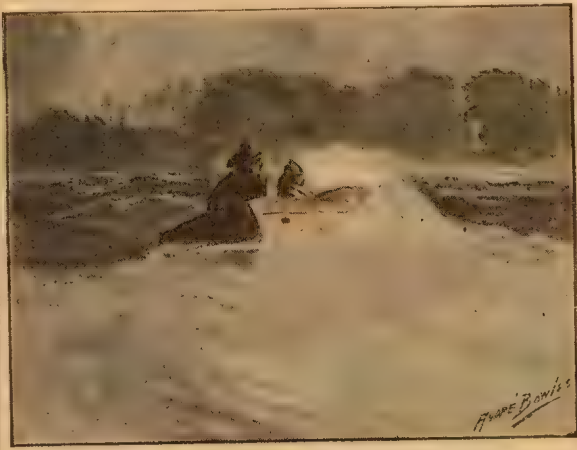
"Yes," said the other, "I've heard about that trick. They say it was really what started these up-to-date fireless cookers you hear about. And I'll watch your work with interest, as well as profit."

That night after supper Amos dug the sort of hole he wanted, and began to heat it thoroughly, by having pine knots burn in it for two hours. Finally he cleared the hole out, and found the ground very hot. Into this receptacle he placed the 'possum, wrapped in leaves, and then the whole was covered up in such a fashion that much of the stored heat would be retained for hours.

They spent another quiet night on shore. Dolph was frequently heard to remark how good it felt to have a firm foundation under one's feet. Once during the night Amos was aroused by some animal prowling about the camp, and upsetting some kettles. It must have been a 'coon trying to get at the balance of the fish, the deer having been hung up out of harm's way. In the morning he showed Dolph the tracks of the animal, and proved from the formation of the toes that it had been a large raccoon.

When the oven was opened it proved to be still quite warm. And the 'possum was cooked to a turn. Amos decided, like every one else who has tasted such a dish, that it resembled a young pig; and while at another time he might not have fancied it any too much, just then it seemed to go right to the spot. Of course, Dolph, being a Southern born boy, had often tasted the dish, and was fairly fond of it. He related numerous stories connected with the extravagant love the colored people have for 'possum and sweet potatoes; and had his chum laughing until his sides ached.

Both of them were feeling in pretty good humor this morning, and with cause; for did not a fair prospect loom up before them, and why remember the woes of the past when everything was working for their benefit now. And when finally, things having been placed aboard the Vixen, Amos gave the accustomed turn to the little engine, and the merry "popping" started, both lads let loose a hearty cheer.



They were bobbing up and down in the seas.

As they ran quietly along, just a little distance from the shore, and gracefully avoiding any obstructions in the shape of patches of grass, Dolph sat there hugging his knees, and alternating his looks between the wooded land and the working motor.

"It seems almost too good to be true," he finally exclaimed, "after all we've gone through. I only hope I don't wake up and find it a dream."

Whereupon Amos pinched him so suddenly that he gave vent to a shout.

"I guess you're wide awake, all right," grinned Amos.

"We'll just take that for granted, thanks," grunted the other; as he rubbed the injured leg, and moved a little further away from the wheelsman.

They made no attempt at speed. This steady forward progress was quite satisfying enough, if it would only keep up. And besides, Amos had a reason for being cautious. In front of him he kept a rude chart. This he had made himself, since it had been impossible to secure anything that covered the tangle of water south of Lake Okeechobee. It was founded on the general map of the Everglades as found in an up-to-date atlas, with such corrections and additions as more recent information seemed to warrant.

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Truth to tell, he was now expecting to run across some outlet, where the waters of the immense flooded region entered the southern tributaries of the Caloosahatchee River. If by chance they passed such an opening by, not seeing it because of the overhanging growth of wild vines and leaning trees, there could be no telling just where they might bring up.

Amos had thought seriously upon the subject. From time to time he had endeavored to mark their position on the chart. It was a haphazard plan at best, since neither of the boys knew just how far south they had blown; but at any rate it gave him a rough idea as to their present whereabouts.

At least once an hour Amos would stop the engine. And regularly would his chum start up, with an anxious look on his face, as though he anticipated the worst. But Amos was seeking information at such times. His usual investigating nature caused him to think of things Dolph would never dream of.

"If there's an outlet there must be a current," he declared.

"Sure," echoed the other, grasping the idea; "and running out too."

"Glad you agree with me on that point. Then let's see if we can find any traces of such a thing around here," Amos went on.

His cousin was willing to watch him, with more or less curiosity, as well as eagerness; for he had unbounded faith in the ability of the Michigan boy to grapple with any crisis. When the power-boat had come to a complete standstill they observed the water with an earnestness calculated to let nothing escape.

"See any motion there?" finally asked Dolph, unable to keep silence longer.

"I must say I don't. But then, we may be moving with the current. Suppose you drop the mudhook over, and see if that makes any difference," replied Amos.

Another wait followed, with nothing doing.

"There's one more test left, and if that fails we'd better move along, for luck doesn't favor us here."

So saying Amos cast a chip out upon the surface of the water.

"Well, I declare, why didn't I think of that?" remarked his cousin, grasping the significance of the idea immediately.

They marked the position of the floating chip. It happened that there was not a breath of wind stirring at this noon hour. And after keeping their eyes glued on the minute argosy of their hopes for at least five minutes both of them realized that its position had hardly changed.

"Huh," grunted Amos, "might as well yank up that mudhook. Nothing doing."

Every time they stopped after that, the same performance was carried out. Once the chip started off quite gayly, and the sanguine Dolph gave vent to a whoop.

"She's on the move, partner; you've struck it at last! There's your current all right. Just follow the chip, and we'll run into the outlet, sooner or later!"

"Wait!" replied the more cautious Amos, with a grin; "perhaps the puzzle ain't so easily solved, after all. If you notice our chip again, old fellow, you'll see that it's turned around, and is coming back to us!"

"Oh! shucks! it is, as sure as fate. Now what d'ye make of that, Amos?" exclaimed the disgusted Southern lad.

"There's a little breath of wind rising. First it blows from the east, and then turns the other way, as if it hadn't settled what to do; and our chip is at the sport of the coming breeze, that's all," declared Amos, blandly.

"Well, that means we don't find the opening you've been hoping to strike, eh?" his cousin went on, disconsolately.

"Seems like it. But since the engine works, we oughtn't to let that upset us. We can do the next best thing, you know, Dolph."

"Which is what? Show me on the map, won't you?" asked the disgusted one.

"If we keep on like this we're bound to bring up on Lake Okeechobee sooner or later, for it must lie to the north. Get that, don't you, Dolph?" and the pilot ran his finger along the chart while speaking.

"Of course, two and two make four. Suppose we do make the big silent lake they told us so much about—what then?" demanded Dolph.

"Oh! we've got a choice of routes, you see. If we choose to head right up north we could strike the mouth of the Kissimmee River, and find civilization. On the other hand, if we turn to the northwest, and cut across diagonally, here's the canal that has been made, connecting with the Caloosahatchee River, and down which we can go to the Gulf."

"That last appeals to me most. It was our intention in the beginning to reach Fort Myers and salt water. I move we waste no more time trying to float chips; but put on a little spurt, and see how soon we can strike the lake."

Amos nodded his head in the affirmative. "That pleases me," he remarked, as he bent over the engine to make another start. It was about the middle of the afternoon when this conversation occurred. For an hour they kept moving steadily along. Dolph was poring over the chart, and trying to figure on their course since leaving the Miami River, so many miles down toward the southeast. The magnitude of the overflowed region in this southern end of the Florida peninsula almost appalled him.

"And this is the dry season down here, too," he observed, finally; "now what d'ye think it can be in August, when it rains every day to beat the band?"

Amos gave it up.

"Still, the country can only hold so much water, and the balance must flow off in every direction. They're cutting big drainage canals right now, and some day expect to have this region a wilderness of sugar-cane and rice," he remarked.

So night found them, and once more they landed to camp, for Dolph vigorously opposed such a thing as sleeping aboard.

In the morning another start was made. The difficulties increased as they progressed, until at noon they seemed to have entered what looked like a swamp, with cypress trees all around them, and the hanging moss giving a dreary look to the whole thing.

Dolph was growing nervous. He fancied that at any minute they would be brought to a standstill, and have to retreat. Then there was always a serious danger in connection with the obstructions; for many times the bow of the boat came in contact with some fallen tree that was hidden under the surface. But Amos had figured it all out, and was cheerfully persistent.

"They told me that there was a swamp along the southern shore of the big lake," he declared stoutly; "and why not this? As long as we can shuttle along in a zigzag course I think we ought to keep moving."

"But it's getting awful dark under this stuff. Have to light the lamps if it keeps on this way," grumbled Dolph.

"Wait a little longer. Seems to me I get a glimpse of light ahead," suggested the hopeful pilot, who had reduced the speed of the boat, so that they were hardly more than crawling along now.

At this Dolph strained his vision to see if his chum spoke truly.

"Say, I do believe it is getting lighter! The trees are just as dense, and the moss hangs as thick as before; but something shines beyond—wonder now, could it be the bully old lake?" he ventured.

Ten minutes later and the difference was so positive that they took heart.

"You're doing the right thing, partner," declared Dolph, always ready to give full credit where it was due; "and I think I had a tiny peek of the open water just then. Wow! I hope it don't prove to be only another stretch of those everlasting old Everglades, with their waving grass and nasty little hummocks of mud."

"Keep hoping," said Amos; "because I think we're going to get our reward for all our work. There, see, another opening in view. And open water beyond, plenty of it!"

Dolph was crouching there on hands and knees, watching. He, too, saw what his comrade mentioned, and it was only with an effort that he restrained his impulse to give a genuine rebel yell.

The little power-boat glided this way and that under the skilful manipulation of her pilot, avoiding all obstacles that threatened to punch a hole in her bow. Then, after a while, they passed the last barrier, shot through a leafy screen, and found themselves on a heaving body of water that stretched north as far as their eyes could see. It was undoubtedly the mysterious Lake Okeechobee at last!

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAND OF THE OYSTER.

That night they had to spend aboard the Vixen, since there was no possible way of going ashore. Dolph made the best of a bad bargain; and after all they were comfortable enough, though the quarters seemed rather cramped. In the morning they held a council of war, to determine just what their next move ought to be; for they had a choice of two things.

"You see," said Amos, once again consulting the chart, "we can follow the border of the lake all the way around here to the west, and then north, until we come to the canal leading to Lake Hickapochee; or by heading boldly out on the water in that direction, due northwest get there quicker. Now which ought we do?"

"I'm for the straight course," declared Dolph, instantly, after his usual impulsive fashion; "besides, it will be something new to cruise across this queer old inland sea. Hope though, the blessed little motor don't go to breaking down when we're out there on the flood."

Perhaps Amos might have preferred the other and safer course; but he allowed himself to be influenced by his companion. And so they started off, immediately breakfast had been disposed of. All went well for an hour and more. The engine hummed merrily, and the Vixen glided through the dark waters of Okeechobee in a fashion that quite pleased both lads. But one of those sudden changes seemed to have taken place overhead.

"Why, looky here, Amos, it's clouded

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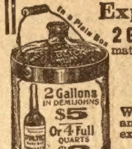

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up again!" cried Dolph, realizing the significant fact.

The Michigan boy had been aware of this for some little time, but had refrained from mentioning it. Matters could not be helped by telling Dolph, and so long as the other seemed happy in his ignorance, what was the use spoiling his fun?

"What if another of those whoopers came along, and caught us away out here? Why, I believe the miserable little craft would founder! The waves must get pretty punky on this big lake. Perhaps it would have been better, after all, if we'd decided to go slower, and hug the border!"

Amos was sure of it. He had felt inclined that way right along, and had only given in to his companion's desire to cut across, because he saw Dolph had his heart set upon it. But Amos never believed in crying over spilt milk. The storm had not yet struck in. It might be kind enough to hold back until they had reached the shore that could be seen far away in the distance. His only reply to what Dolph said was to bend down and increase the speed of the little motor to top-notch. The boat fairly quivered now under the strain; and they were rushing through the water at a speed of more than eight miles an hour, which was supposed to be the limit for that two horse-power engine.

"She's doing fine," said Dolph, nervously.

"Sure she is; and we'll pull through all right yet, see if we don't," asserted his cousin, with one of his cheerful smiles; though deep down in his heart Amos was abit skeptical about the storm holding off long enough for them to cover all the remaining distance.

Those minutes dragged like lead to Dolph. He looked at his little dollar watch, then observed the straining engine, and finally cast his eager eyes across the abyss of heaving water toward the distant land.

Half an hour passed. The merry crackling sound of the exhaust was the only thing they could hear, except the gurgling of the water at the bow, as the boat cut through the surface, urged on by her rapidly driven propeller. By now they could plainly see the shore they were approaching.

"You made a remarkable straight hit of it, Amos," said Dolph, with pride in the look he gave his cousin; "for I can see the piles of dirt that must have been thrown out in starting the canal. Straight on, and in twenty minutes we'll be safe! But the wind is rising, and I'm afraid the storm won't hold off any longer just to please us."

Amos said nothing. He was sitting there, guiding the little boat, his teeth shut tightly, with an air of determination. He noted how the gusts of wind increased, and from which direction they came. And he was evidently forming plans in his active mind that would meet any possible emergency that might arise.

Now they were bobbing up and down in the seas, and at times the propeller even whirled around like lightning as it left the water. This worried Amos more than anything else, for he feared a breakdown. And much of his attention was given to easing the strain when he believed an exposure was about to happen. Dolph gripped the side of the boat and almost held his breath with awe and suspense. At any moment now the full brunt of the storm might rush down upon them and what would happen then appalled him.

"Oh! do you think we can make it?" he asked again and again.

And on every occasion the steady and confident Amos replied in the affirmative, no matter what fears he may have been entertaining himself.

One thing favored them. The wind was coming out of the west, and this accounted for its squally nature; but at the same time the line of trees served as a sort of barrier that protected the little cruising launch. And every minute was taking them closer to those trees, so that the protection continued to increase.

"It's all right!" cried Amos, presently, as he found the water less agitated, and the whirling of the exposed propeller no longer sent agony to his soul; "we're going to make it sure! Now howl all you want to, old wind; you don't get a whack at us this trip."

And so they pushed in until the mouth of the canal was gained, with a snug harbor in sight. After they had anchored, the boys looked out on the heaving bosom of the big treacherous lake, and could not help congratulating themselves on their exceeding good fortune; for the storm had broken, and a mad scene met their view.

"If we had started an hour later we'd be out there now; and what sort of chance would we have, do you think?" remarked Amos, seriously.

"And if you hadn't put on all speed when you did, it would have been the same," echoed Dolph; "and on the whole I'm mighty glad to be here."

The night was a gusty one. They had to spend it aboard the Vixen again, because there was no suitable camp site near by, and the raging storm made it inadvisable to take any chances. But when morning dawned all signs of the recent blow had vanished. The sun arose as smilingly as ever, the birds sang among the trees that were dripping with moisture, and it was hard to believe that such a wretched night had just ended. But that is Florida, with its quick changes from tears to sunshine.

Their dangers and adventures were now evidently in the past; for from now on they were apt to have smooth sailing. Passing through the canal to the two lakes thus connected they finally reached the head of the famous Caloosahatchee River, and started down toward salt water.

When finally they reached a point where oysters were to be had for the lifting, Dolph was the happiest boy on earth. It seemed as though he could never get a sufficiency of the delicious bivalves from which he had been separated too long. And the fish to be taken here tasted so different from those upon which they had lived part of the time they were crossing from the Atlantic to the Gulf.

Amos carefully preserved the chart which had been his sole guide in making this really remarkable cruise in a small power-boat. Up to that time he did not know of any party who had successfully navigated the same course in a craft of that description, though it had been done in dugout canoes.

The boys long afterward read an account of how a lawless character named Hank Peters had been caught by the Florida authorities, and sent to the penitentiary for a long term of years. They hoped this was the same man whom Amos had outwitted, and that his daughter would have peace in her Seminole village lodge.

Doubtless when both venturesome lads again sat around a summer campfire, and related many of the incidents of their winter's campaign to admiring fellow Boy Scouts of the Swamp Fox Patrol, or that known as the Wolverine, they would be apt to live over in memory many of the exciting incidents which are contained in this little chronicle of their voyage, when they found themselves for a time lost in the Everglades of Florida.

The End.

* * *

Far Away Poetry.

"One word more and I am through," said the lecturer on Practical Authorship to his class of advanced aspirants. "I will terminate my remarks this morning with a brief reference to juvenile literature, or being strictly accurate, to the phase of it known as Far Away Poetry.

"Any member of the class before me should be able, with minimum preliminary practice, to do more creditable work in this line of writing. Experience is quite unessential, while the rules are few and simple.

"Far Away Poetry is that branch of juvenile literature which describes in rippling rhyme such localities as Lazybones Land, The Country of Once On a Time, or The Village of By and By. It is classified as Far Away Poetry by common consent; the places described in the stanzas being invariably situated, if we are to believe the authors, in the Clouds, on the edges of the Rainbows, the exact spot where the Sun sinks to rest, or in some rarefied neighborhood equally remote and prismatic.

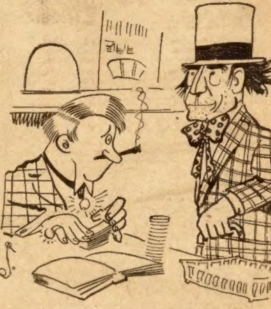
"The number of subjects, and hence the number of poems, is practically limitless, as in a few hurried words I shall be able to show you. The sole limitation, in fact, is that imposed by juvenile understanding itself. Or, by way of illustration, while Hush-a-By Land would unquestionably be an appropriate subject for a children's page, The Hazy Hills of Highball manifestly could not. So it is that discretion must be used, but once one has learned its use, the rest is plain sailing.

"In conclusion, I will read off a few specimen titles, original with myself, to any one of which, if you so desire, you may hitch a Far Away Poem and take to market.

"The first of my titles is Teething Town —excellent reading for very tiny tots—while the Country of Don't-You-Care, The City of Way, Way Off, Thank-You Land; and, for adult perusal, Up-Against-It Island and Over the Bar of Say When.

"The class is now dismissed for the day."

* * *



Tall Actor—"I hear the box office receipts are heavier than usual."

Treasurer—"Yes; nineteen rubes passed lead quarters on us."

* * *

Irishman's Repartee.

Two witnesses were at the Waterford Assizes in a case which concerned long-continued poultry stealing. As usual, nothing could be got from them in the way of evidence until the nearly baffled prosecuting counsel asked, in an angry tone of voice: "Will you swear on your soul, Pat Murphy, that Phady Hooligan has never to your knowledge stolen chickens?" The responsibility of this was too much, even for Pat. "Bedad, I would hardly swear by my soul," he said; "but I do know that if I was a chicken and Phady was about I'd roost high!"

Avoid Blends! Send us your order for Hayner BOTTLED-IN-BOND Whiskey
You KNOW it is good and pure—the Government's Green Stamp over the cork is your protection.

NO MATTER what others may promise—no matter how tempting their offers may seem—*see* if they offer *Bottled-in-Bond* whiskey—and remember—there is only one way you can be *sure* of getting pure, straight whiskey — and that is to *insist* on Bottled-in-Bond.

That's what we offer you—Hayner Private Stock Bottled-in-Bond Whiskey — rich, pure and delicious — shipped in *sealed* case—Direct from Distillery—and all it costs you is $3.20 for FOUR full quarts—express charges paid.

There's no question about a whiskey like *this*—the Government's Green Stamp over the cork is *your* assurance that it is Bottled-in-Bond—fully aged, full 100% proof, full measure — and a *guarantee* that it comes to you just as it left the distillery, in all its original purity and goodness.

4 FULL QUARTS $3.20 IN STRONG SEALED CASE WE PAY EXPRESS CHARGES

HAYNER PRIVATE STOCK WHISKEY BOTTLED IN BOND

WE WANT you to TRY this whiskey on our guarantee you will find it all we claim—as fine as you ever tasted — and the best value you ever saw —or you may send it back at our expense—and we will return your money.

Remember — you take no chances. We take all the risk—and we stand all the expense if we fail to please you.

No letter is necessary—
Cut Out and use this Coupon and address our nearest office

THE HAYNER DISTILLING CO.
Enclosed find $3.20 for which send me FOUR full quart bottles of Hayner Private Stock Bottled-in-Bond Whiskey—express paid—as per your offer. It is understood that if this whiskey is not found as represented and satisfactory to me in every way, it may be returned at your expense—and my $3.20 is to be promptly refunded. G-30

Name ______
Address ______

Note the price—only 80 cents a quart—delivered. Where else can you buy a Bottled-in-Bond whiskey of this magnificent quality at this price.

Orders for Ariz., Cal., Colo., Idaho, Mont., Nev., N. Mex., Ore., Utah, Wash. or Wyo. must be on the basis of 4 quarts for $4.00 by Express Prepaid or 20 quarts for $15.20 by Freight Prepaid. G-N

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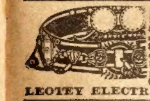
CAPITAL $500,000.00 Full Paid

3 Years to Pay
for the Sweet-Toned
Meister
Piano
$175
30 Days' Free Trial
We Pay the Freight
You are not asked to deposit or pay or advance a cent in any way until you write us and say that the MEISTER is entirely satisfactory and you wish to keep it. Then these are the terms of sale:
$1 a Week or
$5 a Month
No cash payment down. No interest on payments. No extras of any kind. Piano stool and scarf free.
Sold direct from the maker to you at a guaranteed saving of $100. No dealer's profit for you to pay.
Send now for our beautiful Free Catalog which shows eight styles of Meister Pianos.
Our resources exceed $4,000,000. We sell more pianos direct to the home than any other concern in the world.
Rothschild & Company
Dept. 12 V Chicago, Illinois



FREE 10 DAYS' TRIAL
Same Electric Belts sold by doctors at $15 to $60; direct from factory, $3 and up; why pay more? Free 10 days' trial. Cures rheumatism, lame back, varicocele, nervous debility, paralysis, stomach, kidney or liver troubles, etc. Catalog 10c stamps.
LEOTEY ELECTRIC CO., DAYTON, OHIO

TOBACCO HABIT CURED
Prescription sent absolutely free by Mrs. J. Kay, Room Z, Haymarket Building, Chicago, Ill.

Knit Wool Shawls
Free
WHITE or RED

We have made a contract with one of the big mills for a lot of woolen shawls.
We are going to give these shawls away to our readers.
The shawls are made of woolen yarn. They come in two colors, white or red. These shawls can be used in many ways; as a shoulder shawl, like that shown in the cut, or they can be used to throw over the head.
Probably nothing is so useful in a home as a shawl like this. Just the thing for changeable weather. It is very handy to throw on the head when you run into your neighbor's house. Fine to wrap the baby in. Throw it over your shoulders when sitting in a draft.
These shawls are large and well-made, and we want every reader of this paper to have one of them, so we will send you one FREE OF ALL CHARGE, if you will enclose $1.00 for a year's subscription to this paper.
We send the shawl all charges prepaid. Be sure to state whether you want white or red in the proper space below.
This is a splendid offer, and we are glad to be able to distribute these shawls among our readers.
We treat old and new subscribers alike on this splendid offer. If you are already a subscriber say so when you write, and we will have your new subscription commence when the old one expires.
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Country Courtship.

There was many affectin' ties which made me hanker arter Betsy Jane. Her farther's farm jined our'n; their cows and our'n squencht their thurst at the same spring; the measels broke out in both famerlies at nearly the same period; our parents—Betsy's and mine—slept reglarly every Sunday in the same meetin' house, and the nabers used to observe, "How thick the Wards and Peasleys air."

'T was a carm, still nite in Joon. All nater was husht and nary zeffer disturbed the sereen silens. I sot with Betsy Jane on the fense of her farther's pastur. We'd been rompin' threw the woods, killin' flours & drivin' the woodchuck from his native lair.

I cleared my throat and tremblinly sed,-"Betsy, you're a gazelle."

I thought that air were putty fine. I waitid to see what effect it would have upon her. It evidently didn't fetch her, for she up an' sed:

"You're a sheep!"

Sez I, "Betsy, I think muchly of you."

"I don't b'leve a word you say—so there!" With which observashun she hitched away from me.

"I wish thar was winders to my sole," sed I, "so that you could see somme of my feelins. There's fire enough in here," sed I, strikin' my buzzum with my fist, "to bile all the corned beef and turnips in the naberhood."

I should have continnered on in this strane probly for sum time, but unfortunitely I lost my ballunse and fell over into the pasture ker smash, tearin' my close and severely damagin' myself ginerally.

Betsy Jane sprung to my assistance an' dragged me 4th. Then drawin' herself up to her full hite she sed:

"I won't listen to your noncents no longer. Just say strate out what you're drivin' at. If you mean gettin' hitched, I'm in."

I considered that fair enough for all practical purposes, and we proceeded immijitly to the parsons and was made 1 that very nite.—Artemus Ward.

* * *

Pragmatism.

This was the note which was handed to one of the grade teachers the other day:

"Dear Mum—Please ixcuse Johnny today. He will not be at school. He is acting as timekeeper for his father. Last night you gave him this example, if a field is 4 miles square how long will it take a man walking 3 miles an hour to walk 2½ times around it? Johnny ain't no man, so we had to send his daddy. They left early this morning, and my husband said they ought to be back late tonight, tho it would be hard going. Dear Mum, please make the nixt problem about ladies, as my husband can't afford to lose the day's work. I don't have no time to loaf, but I can spare a day off occasionally better than my husband can. Resp'y yrs.,

"MRS JONES."

* * *

The Literary Wage.

A New York magazine editor was talking at the Authors' Club in New York about the poor pay of novelists.

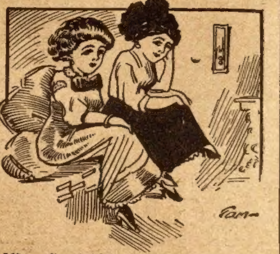
"In England," he said, "they pension their novelists. Joseph Conrad now has a pension of ten dollars a week. Conrad, I understand, is rather bitter about the financial failure of his books.

"A little girl in Geneva once looked up from a magazine and said to Mr. Conrad:

"'What is the meaning of penury, sir?'

"'Penury, my child,' the novelist answered, 'means the wages of the pen.'"

* * *



Miss Scratchley—"Sadie's an awful two-faced thing."

Miss Clawson—"That's convenient for such misfit features. She can rest one set while the other's on duty."

* * *

Did Not Know.

Lew Morris, a Kansas City character of local renown, was standing on the corner of Thirteenth street and Grand avenue one Sunday morning, when a polite stranger accosted him:

"Would you kindly tell me, sir, how to find the Second Presbyterian Church?"

"God bless me, stranger," fervently responded Lew, "I don't even know where the first Presbyterian Church is."

YOURS FOR 3 CENTS A DAY

This $3 Silver Set Free
Also Long-Time Credit on Things for the Home
Here is this month's offer—a $3 gift—which will never be offered again.
The offer expires on Nov. 1.
If you write before then for our Home Lovers' Bargain Book — Fall issue — we will send you with it the order for this set.
It will call for the whole set, entirely free, with any order for $20 or over. Or it calls for the half set—a $1.50 set—with any $10 order or over.

Full Set, Worth $3.00
6 Teaspoons Butter Knife
6 Tablespoons Sugar Shell
This handsome 14-piece Silver Set is made by the Wm. Rogers Mfg. Co., of the highest grade, good heavy nickel silver metal, finely finished, and fully warranted not to wear off. The beautiful flower design is nicely embossed on all pieces.
Half Set, Worth $1.50
6 Teaspoons Butter Knife Sugar Shell
This half set contains 8 pieces of the same fine design and high quality as the full set described above. Comes in fancy silverware box.
Spiegel, May, Stern Co
1212 W. 35th St. Chicago (264)
4,528 Home Things
3 Cents a Day
This mammoth book pictures 4,528 bargains in housefurnishings, picked up from 200 factories. Many of the pictures are in actual colors. It's the largest exhibit ever brought together.
Furniture
Stoves
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A separate Stove Book pictures 456 Empire stoves and ranges, from 89c up; also a big new book showing Illinois watches and jewelry.
Every price is from 30 to 50 per cent below store prices. We guarantee the lowest prices ever quoted on articles like these.
A Year to Pay
Goods are shipped on open charge account. No interest, no security, no red tape or publicity. You pay as convenient —a little each month—by saving a few cents daily.
Goods are sent on approval, to be kept a month before you decide to buy. So you cannot make mistakes.
Over a million homes now have charge accounts with us. Some have had them for 30 years. We shall gladly open one with you on the same convenient terms.
Send Coupon Now
You must send coupon now for our Bargain Book if you want this order for the Silver Set. Both are entirely free. But the offer ends forever on Nov. 1. If you want the Stove Book or Watch and Jewelry Book also, tell us so. And send coupon today.
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HOW FREE: Send your name and I will send you 12 new style wall paintings and 12 coupons, each good for 35 patterns. You hand out one painting and one coupon on a big offer including more and collect 25 cents. You only need to make these twelve 25c sales—no more or less—and we will then send you the big dressed doll and All the other 61 fascinating doll presents. You can do this work in an hour. Our pictures, pattern coupons and other things go like "Hot Cakes." Just send your name today. H. B. PATTERSON, Secy., 501-509 Plymouth Ct., Dept. 326, CHICAGO

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(Also called Tetter, Salt Rheum, Pruritus, Milk-Crust, Weeping Skin, etc.)
ECZEMA CAN BE CURED TO STAY, and when I say cured, I mean just what I say—C-U-R-E-D, and not merely patched up for awhile, to return worse than before. Now, I do not care what all you have used, nor how many doctors have told you that you could not be cured—all I ask is just a chance to show you that I know what I am talking about. If you will write me TO-DAY, I will send you a FREE TRIAL of my mild, soothing, guaranteed cure that will convince you more in a day than I or anyone else could in a month's time. If you are disgusted and discouraged, I dare you to give me a chance to prove my claims. By writing me to-day you will enjoy more real comfort than you had ever thought this world holds for you. Just try it, and you will see I am telling you the truth.
Dr. J. E. Cannaday, 681 Park Square, Sedalia, Mo.
References: Third National Bank, Sedalia, Mo.
Could you do a better act than to send this notice to some poor sufferer of Eczema?

SPEAR Will Trust You Wherever You Live—Write For His Free Catalog

A Personal Word

The rich and prosperous class can always command the luxuries of life, but the average home lover needs the Spear System of Credit to the Nation. I want 1,000,000 families to say of me: "He helped us to furnish and beautify our homes." I ask for no higher tribute to my life's work.

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SPEAR
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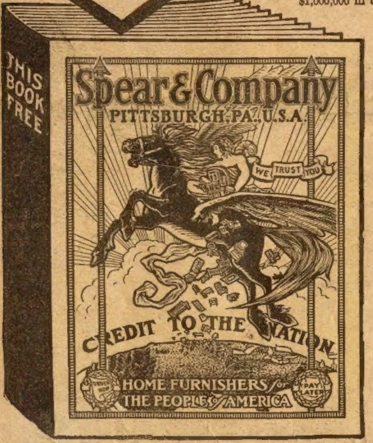

To the Home Lovers of America

Spear of Pittsburgh wants to prove to you, no matter where you live, the wonderful advantages of beautifying your home on his Long Time, Open Account, Easy Credit System. Hundreds of Thousands of Home Lovers from Maine to California now buy their Home Furnishings from the House of Spear. These regular Customers tell their friends and neighbors about **Spear's** High Quality, Low Prices and Wonderfully Liberal Terms, and that is the real reason why **Spear** has built up the Greatest Home Furnishing Business in the World.

But there are still some people—you may be one of them—who do not send to **Spear** of Pittsburgh for their household needs! Many, no doubt, hesitate because they think he is too far away. But this is not true, as you will see, when you understand how simple and easy it is to trade with **Spear,** selecting your goods from his Mammoth Bargain Catalog right in your own home. Wherever you live—North, South, East or West—**Spear** invites you to enjoy all the benefits of the **Spear Credit System.** His catalog contains everything for the home.

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It is so easy to trade with **Spear!** Just drop him a postal or mail the Coupon for the Big Spear Catalog. It comes right back in a hurry—Free to you—filled from cover to cover with an amazing array of wonderful bargains for your home—a vastly greater selection than you could probably get in the combined stocks of 100 average furniture stores. **Spear** shows you his wonderful assortment of Carpets, Rugs and Draperies in the colors, patterns and designs from photographs of the original goods. Just sit down quietly at home with your family at your side, if you choose, and select anything you want from this great Exposition of Household Bargains, including everything in

Furniture,
Carpets,
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Spear Word Is Backed By $1,000,000

Remember, **Spear** must live up to every promise! You get it all in "black and white", before goods are shipped, and then if everything is not exactly as **Spear** says, you can return any article at his expense and get your money back. Can you do this with a store? **Spear's** guarantee of satisfaction is good, because it is backed by over $1,000,000 in cash assets and his reputation for fair and square dealing.

Your Credit Is Good With Spear

Spear Says, "Select what you need—pay when you like." Why deny yourself a beautiful home, furnished with every comfort, when the **Spear** System of Credit Shopping makes it so easy for you to have what you like and pay when most convenient?

Use your credit with **Spear.** No matter where you live, his liberal, open account, easy payment plan gives you every possible credit advantage enjoyed by the most favored and well-to-do customer of any city store. **Spear** trusts all honest people, everywhere, regardless of their income. He charges nothing extra for **Spear** credit, either—not a penny—so don't hesitate—just select what you want from the Mammoth **Spear** Bargain Book, paying for it as you please, without interest, and in small payments as convenient.

Spear Prices Are Lowest of Any

While **Spear's** credit terms are the most liberal in the country, yet his prices are the lowest. This is because **Spear** buys goods in such vast quantities that he secures better prices than would be possible to smaller concerns. By extending his business to hundreds of thousands of customers all over the country, he can afford to accept just one small added profit from each sale. **Spear of Pittsburgh** allows no store or factory on earth to undersell him.

Those who take advantage of the **Spear** System of Credit Buying not only get the benefit of highest quality but also make an actual saving of from one-third to one-half on every order. That is why **Spear's** Business is growing by such wonderful leaps and bounds.

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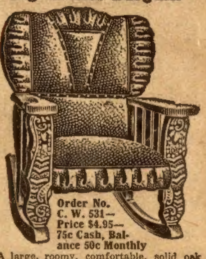
Spear of Pittsburgh will ship anything you select from his wonderful Bargain Catalog on approval. You can keep the goods for a 30 day's home test. Then, if after a whole month you are not fully satisfied, return the goods at **Spear's** expense, and he will refund your money. You see **Spear's** idea is that his home furnishings must sell themselves to you after you have tried them for 30 days. Isn't that about the fairest way in the world to sell goods?

Send Spear YOUR Order Now

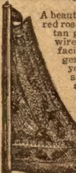
You needn't wait for **Spear's** Catalog. If you want a Rug, Set of Dishes, Go-Cart, Rocker or any of the articles shown on this page, just send **Spear** a trial order right now, and let him prove to you once and for all that no other concern in the country can possibly give you the wonderful values that he can. You have already heard of **Spear,** even though you have never yet done any shopping with him.

Big Rocker Bargain



Order No. C. W. 531—Price $4.95—75c Cash, Balance 50c Monthly

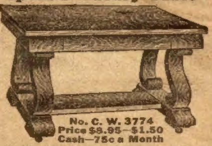
A large, roomy, comfortable, solid oak Rocker with high, wide back, fully tufted and buttoned. Seat is large and roomy, upholstered with high grade black Sylvan leather over full steel springs and beautiful ruffled edge to match back. Construction is solid golden oak throughout, with high gloss golden finish. Wide arms, front posts of handsome design.



A beautiful, high color Brussels Rug, red rose design, with either green or tan ground. Guaranteed full 9-wire Tapestry Brussels with wool facing. This is the greatest genuine Brussels Rug value you ever saw. It is perfectly safe to order direct from this, as we positively will refund your money if on receipt you are not perfectly satisfied. Mail the Coupon below today with $1.50 cash.

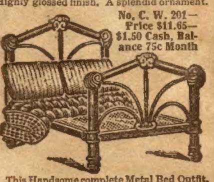
No. C. W. 4602—Size 9x12—Price $11.95—Balance 75c per Month

Spear's Library Table



No. C. W. 3774 Price $8.95—$1.50 Cash—75c a Month

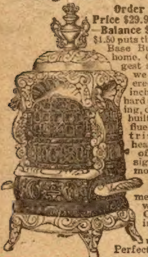
This handsome, Colonial Design Library Table is guaranteed to please you or money back. Large, heavy, 28 x 42 inches; made of American quartered oak, fitted with drawer. Highly glossed finish. A splendid ornament.



No. C. W. 201—Price $11.65—$1.50 Cash, Balance 75c Month

This Handsome complete Metal Bed Outfit, consisting of heavy, perfectly constructed Iron Bed, any color, 4 feet 6 inches wide, a good woven wire spring with coil supports; 50-pound cotton top mattress 2 pillows.

Big Stove Bargain

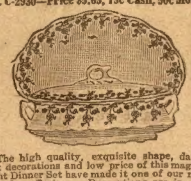


Order No. C-2708—Price $29.95—$4.50 Cash—Balance $2 Per Month.

$1.50 puts this magnificent Base Burner in your home. One of the biggest stove bargains we have ever offered. Stands 60 inches high; burns hard coal; self-feeding, double heating, built with a return flue. Beautifully trimmed with heavy silver nickle of exquisite design. It gives ⅓ more heat with ⅓ less fuel. Tea Kettle attachment for heating water. Pipe Collar connecting double heating flue with up-stairs room. Perfect in every way.

Spear's 55-Piece Dinner Set

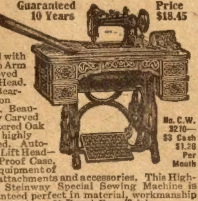
No. C-2930—Price $5.65, 75c Cash, 50c Month



The high quality, exquisite shape, dainty art decorations and low price of this magnificent Dinner Set have made it one of our most popular offerings. Decorations are in pure gold in continuous border effect, wonderfully pleasing and effective. This set is made in our West Virginia Pottery, which is conceded to be the largest, most modern in the world.

"Steinway Special" Sewing Machine

Guaranteed 10 Years **Price $18.45**

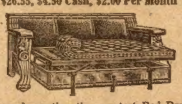


No. C.W. 3210—$3 Cash $1.28 Per Month

Fitted with a High Arm Improved Drop Head. Ball Bearing Iron Stand. Beautifully Carved Quartered Oak Case, highly glossed. Automatic Lift Head—Dust Proof Case. Full equipment of steel attachments and accessories. This High-Class Steinway Special Sewing Machine is guaranteed perfect in material, workmanship and operation. 30 Days' Free Trial.

Wonderful Unifold Davenport

No. C-1521—Price (Including Mattress) $26.55, $4.50 Cash, $2.00 Per Month

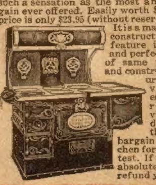


Beyond question the greatest Bed Davenport ever offered by anyone at the price. Two useful articles in one—a full size, comfortable bed and a beautiful, luxurious davenport. Of solid quartered, golden finished oak or northern birch, mahogany finished. Upholstered over full steel coil springs in our celebrated imperial leather. A truly wonderful bargain! Money back if not absolutely satisfactory on a 30 days' free trial.

Spear's Famous New 'Special Plymouth' Range

No. C2601—Price 19.95, Without Reservoir
No. C2600—Price $23.95, With Reservoir
Cash $3.00—$1.50 Per Month

This is the great range that has caused such a sensation as the most amazing bargain ever offered. Easily worth $35. Yet our price is only $23.95 (without reservoir $19.95).



It is a masterpiece in construction. Every feature is complete and perfect. Oven is of same proportions and construction features found in very highest priced ranges. A very small deposit sets this famous bargain in your kitchen for free 30 days test. If it don't give absolute service, we refund your money.

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